

SERMONS.

SERMONS,

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume contains about half of the published sermons of Archbishop Leighton, and the selection has been made with a view to general usefulness. The sermons of this holy prelate are distinguished for calmness, soberness, clearness, and for the high and scriptural standard of holiness which they maintain; they bespeak the heavenly state of the mind from which they proceeded, and the knowledge which he possessed, both of the will of God, and of the condition of the human heart by nature, and under the renewing influence of Divine grace. There is much in them to alarm the ungodly, and to persuade them to turn from their evil ways and live; much to encourage those who are beginning to feel the burthen of sin, and still more to comfort and edify the true believer in Jesus Christ.

Their aim may be briefly described by the concluding words of one of the sermons, "That we may be henceforth dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to ourselves, and alive only to God."

It may be interesting to the reader, before he commences the sermons, to read Bishop Burnet's description of the

preaching of this eminent pastor of Christ's flock. "He had a sublime strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty of thought, of language, and of pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye when he preached, and have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears before him."

He, being dead, now speaketh once more through these pages, and may it please that Holy Spirit who blessed the words which fell from his servant's lips, now, by their means, to melt many hard and stony hearts, and to add to the light, and strength, and consolation of many of the people of Christ, to the praise and glory of his great name

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE SINNER A REBEL AGAINST GOD.

How true is that word of our Saviour, who is truth itself, "Without me, ye can do nothing;" severed from me, as that branch that is not in me. They who are altogether out of Christ in spiritual exercises, do nothing at all. It is true, they may pray and hear the word, yea, and preach it too, and yet in so doing they do nothing, nothing in effect. They have the matter of good actions, but it is the internal form gives being to things. They are but a number of empty words and a dead service to a living God; for all our outward performances and worship of the body are nothing but the body of worship, and therefore nothing but a carcase, except the Lord Jesus, by his Spirit, breathe upon it the breath of life. Yea, the worshipper himself is spiritually dead, till he receive life from Jesus, and be quickened by his Spirit. If this be true, then it will follow necessarily, that where numbers are met together, as here, pretending to serve and worship God, yet he hath very few that do so indeed, the greatest part being out of Christ: and such being without him, they can do nothing in his service.

ROMANS viii. 7.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The ordinary workings and actions of creatures are suitable to their nature, as the ascending of light things, and the moving of heavy things downwards : so the vital and sensitive actions of things that have life and sense. The reasonable creature, it is true, hath more liberty in its actions, freely choosing one thing, and rejecting another ; yet it cannot be denied, that in the acting of that liberty, their choice and refusal follow the sway of their nature and condition. As the angels and glorified souls, their nature being perfectly holy and unalterably such, they cannot sin ; they can delight in nothing but in obeying and praising that God, in the enjoyment of whom their happiness consisteth, still ravished in beholding his face. The saints again that have not yet reached that home and are but on their journey, they are not fully defecated and refined from the dross of sin. There are in them two parties, natural corruption and supernatural grace ; and these keep a struggling within them ; but the younger shall supplant the elder. Grace shall in the end overcome ; and, in the meanwhile, though it be not free from mixture, yet it is predominant. The main bent of a renewed man is obedience and holiness, and any action of that kind he rejoices in ; but the sin that escapes him, he cannot look upon but with regret and discontent. But, alas ! they that be so minded are very thin sown in the world. Even in God's peculiar fields, where the labour of the gospel is, and the outward profession of true religion unanimously received, yet the number of true converts, spiritually-minded persons, is very small ; the greatest part acting sin with delight, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness, living in disobedience to God, as in their proper element ; and the reason is, the contrariety of their

nature to our holy Lord ; “ The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

“ The mind.” Some render it the prudence or wisdom of the flesh. Here you have it “ the carnal mind.” But the word signifies indeed, an act of the mind, rather than either the faculty itself, or the habit of prudence in it, so as it discovers what is the frame of both these—the minding ; as it is used, ver. 5, conformably to that of Moses, Gen. vi. “ Every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually.” The word indeed signifies the wise thoughts. So then, take the full latitude of it thus ; “ The carnal mind,” in its best and wisest thoughts, is direct “ enmity against God.”

“ Carnal.” What is meant by carnal or the flesh here ? It is the whole corrupt nature of man ; and that we may know by its opposition to the Spirit ; not to the spirit or soul of a man, for so it hath no thoughts nor minding, these being proper to the soul, but opposed to the Spirit of God.

Now, the corruption of nature is called the flesh, not without very good reason ; not only to signify the baseness of it, the flesh being the more ignoble and meaner part of a man, but because the greatest part of the sins of men’s lives are about sensitive objects and things that concern the flesh or the body. It lets in temptation of sin to the soul by the doors of the senses, and it gives the last perfection or accomplishment to sin, by the external acting of it. The very first sin that brought in death and misery with it upon mankind, the pleasures of the eye and of the taste, were sharers in the guiltiness of it.

“ The carnal mind.” Man in regard of his composition is, as it were, the tie and band of heaven and earth : they meet and are married in him. A body he has taken out of the dust, but a soul is breathed into him from heaven, from the Father of spirits : a house of clay, but a guest of most noble extraction. But the pity is, it hath forgot its original,

and is so drowned in flesh, that it deserves no other than to go under the name of flesh. It is become the slave and drudge of the body, and, like the Israelites in Egypt, made perpetually to moil in clay. What is all your merchandise, your trades and manufactures, your tillage and husbandry, but all for the body, in its behalf, for food and raiment? In all these, the mind must be careful and thoughtful, and yet properly they reach it not, for itself hath no interest in them. It is true, the necessity of the body requires much of these things, and superfluous custom far more; but it is lamentable that men force their soul to forget itself and its proper business, to attend to these things only, and be busy in them. They spend all their time and their choicest pains upon perishing things, and, which is worse, engage their affections to them. They "mind earthly things, whose end is destruction," the same word that is here.

Will you consider seriously, that your souls run the hazard of perishing, because you consider not their spiritual nature. When that earthly tabernacle of yours shall fall to the ground, and ere long it must fall, your souls must then enter eternity, and though you had as large a share of earthly things as your earthly hearts now would wish, they will all lose their use in that moment. They are not a proper good for the soul at any time, and least at that time. If you keep it all your life long, busy about the interest and benefit of the flesh, the body, how poor will it be when they part, having provided nothing at all for itself, but the guiltiness of a sinful life, which will sink it into that bottomless pit! Be forewarned, then; "for to be carnally minded is death."

"The carnal mind." Now as sin hath debased and degenerated the soul of man, making it carnal, so the Son of God, by taking on him our nature, hath sublimated it again and made it spiritual. The souls that receive him are spiritualized; yea, as sin made the soul carnal, grace makes the very body to become spiritual, making it partaker and co-

worker in spiritual things together with the soul, in doing and suffering ; and participant of the hopes too of an everlasting reward. This is the main Christian character our apostle gives here, that they are spiritually minded, and that their actions suit their minds : “ they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Whereas before, with the rest of the world, they were eager in the pursuit of honours and profits, and worldly pleasures, the new stream of their desires runs in another channel. They seek after honour, and are very ambitious of it ; but it is such honour the apostle speaks of in this epistle, ii. 7 : “ By patient continuance in well doing they seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.” Their mind is upon profit and gain ; but it is with the same apostle, that they “ may win Christ,” and they account all other things loss in comparison. And their desires are after pleasures too, but not carnal pleasures ; these are both base, and of short continuance ; but the pleasures they aim at are those that are “ at God’s right hand, and for evermore :” and that path of life which the psalmist speaks of, that way of holiness, which leads thither, is their delight. Spiritual exercises they go to, not as their task only, but more as their joy and refreshment. And this change the Spirit of God works in the soul, making it, yea, and the body wherein it dwells, of carnal, to become spiritual : as fire, to which the Holy Ghost is compared, refines sand and ashes, and makes of them the purest glass, which is so neat and transparent.

“ Enmity against God.” Sin hath not only made us unlike God, by defacing his beautiful image in us, not only strangers, by making us wander far off from him, but enemies ; nor enemies only, but enmity in the abstract : for that is emphatical, “ the carnal mind is enmity,” nothing else but enmity.

Now this enmity is described in the latter clause of the text, by an antipathy, so to call it, or non-compliance with the law of God ; “ it is not subject to the law of God, nei-

ther can it be," while it remains such. There is an absolute impossibility in it to suit with the law of God, and consequently with God himself. The reason lies in their opposite qualities. God is spiritual and holy, and so is the law, as our apostle hath it in the preceding chapter; and the opposition he there makes betwixt his unregenerate part and the law, is wholly true of the unregenerate man. "The law is holy," says he, ver. 12, 14, "the law is spiritual;" to which too he opposes, "But I am carnal, sold under sin."

Where are now those who so vilify grace and magnify nature? or, shall I rather say, nullify grace and deify nature? Here is the best eulogy the apostle will bestow upon the best of natures, "enmity against God." Nay, all the sparkles of virtue and moral goodness in civil men and ancient heathens, are no better; besides many other things to be said of the virtues of those philosophers, as ignorance of Christ, by whom alone this enmity is removed. I should easily confess, nor, I think, can any deny it, that there is in the very ruins of our nature some character left of a tendency to God as our chief and only satisfying good, which we may call a kind of love, and when we hear him spoken of, we find it flutter and stir; and hence men so abhor the imputation of hating God and being his enemies; yet this is so smothered under sensuality and flesh, that until we be made spiritual, nothing appears but practical, and, as they call it, interpretative enmity.

There is one thing which stains them enough; they were all, as one of the fathers speaks, "*animalia gloriæ!*" they aimed not, in their study of virtue, at God's glory, but at their own; and is not that quarrel enough, and matter of enmity? Says not he, "My glory will I not give unto another?"

But that is most useful for you, to convince you of the too good conceit which men have of their natural condition. You would take it hardly, the most profane of you all, if any should come to you in particular, and tell you, you are

an enemy to God ; but I answer, there is none of you, if you believe the scriptures, but will confess that all men are naturally such, and therefore, except we find in ourselves a notable alteration from the condition of nature, we must take with it, that we are enemies, yea, *enmity* to God. Of strangers, to become acquainted with him, yea, which is more, of enemies to become friends, is a greater and more remarkable change, than can happen to a man without any evidence and sign of it. I know there is very great variety in the way and manner of conversion, and to some, especially if it be in their tender years, grace may be instilled and dropped in, as it were, insensibly ; but this I may confidently say, that whatsoever be the way of working it, there will be a wide and apparent difference betwixt friendship with God, and the condition of nature, which is enmity against him. Do not flatter yourselves. So long as your minds remain carnal, ardent in love to the world, and cold in love to God, “ lovers of pleasures more than of God,” you are his enemies, for with him there is no neutrality. That which they say, taxing it as a weakness in the sex, “ Aut amat, aut odit, nihil est tertium,” is in this case necessarily true of all. And this is God’s prerogative, that he can judge infallibly of the inside. Those shadows of friendship men use one with another will not pass with him. Deceived he cannot be, but men may easily ; and, alas ! too many do deceive themselves in this matter to their own ruin.

We may learn hence, how deep sin goes into our nature, and consequently, that the cure and remedy of it must go as deep ; that all the parts of our bodies, and all the powers of our souls, are polluted originally—our very mind and conscience, as the apostle speaks, for it is immersed in flesh and enslaved to flesh naturally, and therefore goes under its name. We are become all flesh ; that is the spring of our mischiefs. We have lost our likeness to our Father, the Father of spirits, the purest and most spiritual Spirit, till renewed by participation of his Spirit in our flesh.

And it is the error, not only of natural men, but somewhat of the godly too, that in self-reformation they set themselves against actual sin, but they lay not the axe to the root of the tree, this root of bitterness, this our inbred and natural enmity against God ; and till this be done, the lopping off of some branches will do no good ; while the root is in vigour, those will grow again, and possibly faster than before. Bewail every known act of sin, as much as you can, for the least of them deserves it ; but withal let the consideration of them lead you into thoughts of this seed of rebellion, the wickedness of our nature, that takes life with us in the womb, and springs and grows up with us ; and this will humble us exceedingly, and raise our godly sorrow to a higher tide. We find David taketh this course in the fifty-first Psalm, where he is lamenting his particular sin of adultery and murder ; it leads him to the sinfulness of his nature : “ I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me ; ” which he mentions not to extenuate or diminish his sin ; no, he is there very far from that strain, but adds it as a main aggravation. Indeed, the power of original sin in the regenerate is laid very low, yet is it not altogether extinct, which they find often to their grief, and this makes them cry out with our apostle, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” The converted are already delivered, as he there adds, from the dominion of it, but not from the molestation and trouble of it. Though it is not a quiet and uncontrolled master, as it was before, yet it is in the house still, as an unruly servant or slave, ever vexing and annoying them ; and this body of death they shall have still cause to bewail, till death release them. This leprosy hath taken so deep root in the walls of this house, that it cannot perfectly be cleansed till it be taken down ; and it is this, more than any other sorrows or afflictions of life, that makes the godly man not only content to die, but desirous, longing with our apostle, “ to be dissolved, and be with Christ, which is far better.”

As this teaches us the misery of man's nature, so it sets off and commends exceedingly the riches of God's grace. Are men naturally his enemies? Why then admire, first, his patience and bounty a little, and then we will speak of his saving grace. Could not he very easily ease himself of his adversaries, as he says by the prophet, Isa. i. 24? Wants he power in his right hand to find out and cut off all his enemies? Surely no. Not only hath he power to destroy them all in a moment, but the very withdrawing of his hand, that upholds their being, though they consider it not, would make them fall to nothing. Yet is he pleased not only to spare transgressors, but to give them many outward blessings, "rain and fruitful seasons," as the apostle speaks. And the earth, which is so full of man's rebellion, is yet more full of God's goodness; "The earth is full of thy goodness," says the psalmist. It is remarkable, that that same reason which is given, Gen. vi. 5, of the justice of God in drowning the world, is, viii. 21, rendered as the reason of God's resolved patience ever since; "And the Lord said, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Then consider his grace in finding a way of reconciliation, and not sparing his own Son, his only begotten Son, to accomplish it. Nor did the Son spare himself. O matchless love!—to lay down his life, not for friends, but for strangers; not only so, but enemies, for unrighteous and ungodly persons, such as be at enmity against him; Rom. v. 7, 8. And having done this, he sends his word, the message of reconciliation, to rebels, and sends his Spirit into the hearts of those whom he hath appointed to salvation, to change their spirits, that they perish not in disobedience. He brings "them near who were far off," having slain the enmity by the death of his Son.

As many of you then, as have hitherto heard this message of reconciliation in vain, be persuaded at last to give ear to

it. This is all that God's ambassadors require, according to their instructions from himself, that men would lay down their enmity against him, and not be so foolish as wilfully to perish in it: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Consider that this enmity is unjust and unhappy. Unjust it is, being against him who is the chief object of love, who is altogether goodness, both in himself and towards his creatures. It is too much not to love him with most ardent and superlative affection; but to entertain enmity against him is madness. As it was said to one who asked, Why are the beautiful loved? "It is a blind man's question;" certainly we are blind, if we see not cause enough, not only to desist from enmity, but to be inflamed with his love. One glance of his amiable countenance is sufficient to cause the most rebellious heart to yield, and lay down arms, and for ever devote itself to his service. No, we know him not, and therefore it is we hold out against him. Is he not the living spring of all our comforts? Have we not from him, life, and breath, and all things? And is he not "ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin?" Let mercy melt our hearts to him, those sweet rays of love. Let his loving-kindness overcome these stubborn hearts and spirits of ours. Among enemies, the weaker usually seeks first for peace, but here it is the mighty: almighty God comes to entreat agreement with sinful clay.

But if this prevail not, then think how unhappy this enmity is. You who are so afraid of men, and those weak men, of men like yourselves, whose breath is in their nostrils, will ye not tremble at his power, and be afraid to continue on terms of hostility against him who is the Lord of Hosts, who hath power both over soul and body, to kill both and cast them into hell? What is the stoutest of men, but as stubble to the flame of his wrath? "Our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. "The sinners in Zion are afraid," says the prophet. "Who shall dwell with devouring fire and

everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. Then, if you would not perish when his wrath is kindled, take that word of Eliphaz, Job xxii. 21; "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."

And to you, so many as he hath taken into friendship with himself, look backward to the gulf you have escaped, and forward to the happiness you are appointed to, and let the joint consideration of both awaken your hearts and tongues to praises. How can your hearts contain such a wonder of love as he hath manifested to you, and not run over in songs and praise?

And, as you owe him praises, so study, being made his friends, to become more like Him. To love and hate the same things with him will be a sure testimony of friendship. And because carnality, or fleshly and earthly-mindedness, is here made the character of enmity, mortify those affections, nail them to that cross of Christ, whereby the enmity was taken away. And further, being once admitted into friendship, labour for a further degree of intimacy with him, and forbear every thing that may hinder that. Use frequent converse with him; for that both entertains and increases friendship. If any thing fall out on your part, as it too often does, that may occasion any strangeness betwixt you and your God, rest not till it be removed. And if you walk in this way, it shall undoubtedly at length bring you where you shall abide in his presence for ever, and shall no more fear any breach, or interruption of enjoying him. To him be praise! Amen.

SERMON II.

MERCY DESPISED, AND CONTEMPT PUNISHED.

ISAIAH XXX. 15—18.

For thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.

But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses, therefore shall ye flee: and we will ride upon the swift, therefore shall they that pursue you, be swift.

One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.

IN the sentence of that greatest and biggest judgment that ever yet came on the world, the universal deluge, as we have it, Gen. vi. that word doth most lively express the reason of it, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." For thus it is, while he spares even his own people, he is at a continual strife with them by gracious entreaties and mercies, by advices and warnings and threatenings, still contesting; that is the way he uses in the contest on his part, against refusals, and revolts, and rebellions on their part. Thus is it here.

The question betwixt him and his people is about the

help of Egypt: this God often declares to be wholly against his mind and their own good; yet, they on all occasions had so strong a mind to it that they could not be diverted. The prophet here hath his message concerning this point, to preach it, and to write it, "that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever," ver. 8; he shows them plainly, that this course was wholly without the counsel and consent of God, yea, directly against it, and that it should succeed accordingly; "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion;" it shall prove to you according to its name, "a land of distress and trouble," instead of help. And if you would know what would suit that other name of Egypt better, that were humble yieldance to God, and confidence in him: your "Rahab," your best "Egypt," your truest "strength" were, "to sit still;" ver. 7. This is here again represented to them, so gladly would he reclaim them.

"For thus saith the Lord." The words have, 1. God's express advice to his people; 2, their peremptory refusal of it; 3, his just sentence passed upon their obstinacy. The advice is prefaced with the usual words of the prophets, "Thus saith the Lord;" for in that lies the dignity and authority of the message. His advices, doubtless, are the choicest and the safest: yea, his counsels are all commands, requiring duly the most absolute obedience.

"The Lord Jehovah." Were but his word known to be his and taken so, how would our souls melt, and yield to the impressions of it, when we read or hear! O learn to hear him, to take every word of his as from his own mouth, every time the law is read, as if thou heard it from Mount Sinai. So think, Now God commands me to fear him, as if you heard him speaking from heaven. That would level more our opinion of men, and make less difference of his messengers.

Another word of his style is here added, "The holy One

of Israel." This is much to be considered by his people, the holiness of his nature, and withal the nearness of his relation to them, and so the reverence and obedience we owe him, our deep engagement to holiness as his people, his children. This is his image in us, if we are truly such. All his sons and daughters are like him, "holy as he is holy." The blind base world thinks it a word of disgrace, but the great God owns it as a chief point of his glory, a diamond of his crown, and frequently expresses it as one of the titles he most delights to be known by, "Holy, holy, holy." And as this is beheld, the heart cannot but be filled with reverence and holy fear and self-abasement; as this prophet in seeing the vision and hearing that voice, "Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone;" Isa. vi. 5.

This is here used fitly to scare his people from rebellion, the unholy way on which they were so bent; and the rather, because they were grown weary of it, and desired not to hear this word; ver. 9; therefore it is the more repeated; "Because ye despise this word," ye shall hear it the more: ver. 12. The prophet will neither be mocked nor threatened out of it; he will both deliver his message and give the King who sent him his own title. And O that we knew him according to it, and understood what this means, "The holy One of Israel!" He was a holy man and knew something, who yet confesses his own ignorance in that point, (there must be some knowledge of it to discover ignorance of it), "I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy," Prov. xxx. 3.

"In returning and rest." In leaving off the pains ye take in messages and journeys to Egypt, in humbly and quietly composing yourselves to wait on me and trust in me; submitting to my hand, in what I bring upon you, and from the same hand, mine alone, expecting deliverance in due time. This does not bar the use of all lawful means, but, as it shuts out perplexing cares and turmoil even in those

good means, so it expressly forbids all intermeddling with all unwarranted ways, such as God doth not direct us to, but rather dissuades us from.

And if this be the safest way, surely it is the sweetest, easiest way. There cannot be any thing easier than to be quiet and sit still, to rest and trust, and so be safe and strong. And as it is in this particular, so generally it is in all the ways of God; they are the only easy, peaceable, sweet ways, with the least pains, and the surest advantage. And the ways of disobedience, besides what comes after, are, even for the present, more turbulent, laborious, perplexed ways. What a hurry are men put in, to serve their lusts or their ambition, when if they attain their object, it does not quit the cost and the pains; besides that often their hopes mock them, and after long pursuit they embrace a shadow. Thus men woo their own vexation, and take a great deal more pains to be miserable, than they would be put to to make them happy. What a pity, to pay so dear for nothing, to give their riches and treasures, and to be at pains too to carry them to "a people that shall not profit them"—both their expense and travel laid out to no purpose! The voluptuous, or covetous, or ambitious, how do they project, and drudge, and serve their wretched lusts, who when they have done one piece of service, are still to begin another! And what is the profit of all, but shame and sorrow at last? The humble sober-minded Christian saves all that pains, and hath his heart's desire in quietness and confidence. His great desire and delight is God; and by desiring and delighting, he hath him. "Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire"—himself; and then surely thou wilt have all. Any other thing "commit to him, and he shall bring it to pass."

Strange! men might have God at an easier rate than the poorest vanities they are hunting after, and yet they will not. A full fountain of living waters is ready provided,

yet they will be at pains to hew out little cisterns, which, after all their pains, are but "broken cisterns, and can hold no water."

I know not what men are doing, still at work, when they might better sit still; troubling themselves and all about them, and cannot well tell for what. O the sweet peace of believing and obeying God! they truly conquer sitting still. In all times they are safe under the shadow of the Almighty; are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

"And ye would not, but said, No." Thus men sometimes flatly reject his counsels, and when they are not so gross as plainly to speak it out, yet say so in doing so, and for good manners' sake will blanch it with reproaching the messengers; will have it to be not God's mind, but men's own fancy, a false vision; will own nothing for truth but what suits their humour and design. First they resolve on their course without acquainting God, they ask not his advice; then, when he is pleased to give it by his messengers, they reject it, not under that name as God's advice, but will not have it pass for this, because it crosses their already determined course. If it favoured that, then, no question it were welcome enough as his word. This is meant by those words, ver. 10. "Which say to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." And so they used Jeremiah long after, in this very point; Jer. xlii. 2. And so they go on to take their own course; "No, but we will flee upon horses."

And this is the nature of carnal hearts: they are generally inclined to rebel, and take a way of their own, casting away the counsels of God, as not suiting with the state, or with wit, or points of honour. They find more feeling and real substance in sensual things than in the promises of God; these seem airy unsure things to them, therefore, they would still see apparent means, and where these fail, think it but a fancy to rest on God. They dare not trust him so but as withal to do for themselves, although nothing

can be done by them perhaps but what he forbids, which therefore cannot be done without giving up with him, and departing from their trust on him. All this cleaves to us, and much cause have we to suspect ourselves, when it is but doubtful that there appears little or no evidence of God's counsel or goodwill to a business, but rather clear characters of his dislike, and much of our own will, a stout uncontrollable bent to it ; conscious to ourselves of this, that either we have not asked advice of God at all, or very slightly, not being much upon our knees with it ; or possibly in asking his advice, have brought our answer with us, in our own breasts the lying oracle ; that making answer, and we consenting to delude ourselves ; not hearkening to any thing that does not sound to our purpose.

Our hearts are exceedingly deceitful, and particularly in this point of withdrawing our trust from God, and leaving off to follow him in his ways, to trust on the arm of flesh, on policy and strength, and self-resolved undertakings, rather than on him without these. Evil men think that those who advise them to trust on God, are silly fellows, who know not what belongs to policy and reasons of state. A fancied wisdom it is that men are enamoured with, and look not to a higher wisdom, consider not God, that "he also is wise." There is, I think, in that word a tart scorn of the folly of their seeming wisdom. Be it that you are wits, yet you will not deny some wisdom to God ; "Yet he also is wise." So they think not on his power either, therefore he puts them in mind that "the Egyptians are men."

Well, if you be resolved on that course, says God, then know mine too, that I am resolved upon—"therefore ye shall flee," shall have fleeing enough ; and if you be "swift, they that pursue you shall be swifter," and "one" shall serve to "chase a thousand, the rebuke," the very terror of one. This is the condition of the mightiest people, and the best appointed armies when forsaken of God. There is no strength, nor courage, nor any thing of worth, in any of

the creatures, but as it is derived from God ; it is dependent on him in the continuance and use of it. " Why are thy valiant men swept away ? They stood not because the Lord did drive them," Jer. xlv. 15. We have seen this, and the turn of it on both sides, how men become a prey to any party when the terror from God is upon them.

Therefore learn we to fear him ; to beware of all ways wherein we may justly apprehend him to be against us ; to cleave to him and to his truth, when it is lowest, and when no human means of help appear, then think you hear him saying to you, " Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

"Therefore will the Lord wait." There is no language of men nor of angels fit to express the graciousness of God's punishments and the threatenings of them ; as if they were violently drawn and forced from him, but mercy, and the sweet promises thereof, naturally flowing from him. Thus here ; he is forced to give up his people to their own counsels, because they will not follow his advices. He entreats them but to be quiet and let him do for them ; but seeing they will not " sit still," and be safe at his direction, they must run their own course, and fall in it. But it cannot pass so ; they must not be quite given over ; the Lord hath an interest in them which he will not lose. They must indeed, for a time, eat the fruit of their own ways, and that is not a season to show them favour ; but the Lord will wait a better hope. He is resolved to show them mercy, and will find his own time for it ; "Therefore will he wait that he may be gracious."

And this he is moved to, according to his gracious nature, by the greatness of their distress and desolation. Though procured by themselves, by their great, their inflexible stubbornness, yet he pities to see them so " left as a beacon on the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill ; and therefore will the Lord wait." Thus we have the proper arguings of free mercy, which otherwise, to our

narrow thoughts, may seem strange and somewhat inconsequent. Such a "therefore" as this, so unexpectedly changing the strain, doth genuinely and sweetly follow upon the premises, when free love is the medium : that intervening in the midst, makes the sweet turn. Your iniquities prevail to bring you low, and lengthen out your calamities ; "therefore" I will let that have its course, and will stay till my fit time come to do you good. Meanwhile I will lie hid, and be as sitting still ; but when that time comes, I will get up and show myself. "He will be exalted, that he may have mercy on you : for the Lord is a God of judgment." He is wise, and just, and good, and knows his measures of afflicting his people, his times and ways of delivering them, and of bringing destruction on his enemies, and will not let slip this season ; and it being so, this certainly follows, that they "are blessed that wait on him."

Observe, first, the strong inclination of God to show mercy. He would willingly have his people to find nothing but ease : he delights in the prosperity of his servants, would have them constantly have a sweet, peaceful, yea, cheerful life, by constant walking in his ways ; but they are often the enemies of their own peace, grieve his Spirit, and turn him to be their enemy. But he cannot persist in that to his own : he longs to be at his way of mercy and loving kindness again. "He retains not his anger for ever," because mercy pleases him. He inflicts judgment for sin, but what he delights in is mercy. Therefore says the prophet, Lam. iii. 32, "Though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies ; for he doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men." Though he doth "grieve them," yet "not willingly : " they themselves procure and draw on that by grieving his Spirit. But he willingly shows mercy, for that abounds : there is such multitude and plenty of it, that, as to full breasts, it is a pleasure to him to let it forth. Of the two words "gracious" and "merciful," which stand first in

the name of God, *Exod. xxxiv. 6*, the one signifies "free grace," the other, "tender bowels of mercy." This is no emboldenment to continue in sin; yea, it is of all things most fit encouragement and inducement to a sinner to return from his sin: and so it is used and urged throughout the scriptures; *Isa. xxxi. 5, 6*; *lv. 7*; *Jer. iii. 12*. In public calamities, where a people are charging the cause thereof upon themselves, searching their hearts, and their ways, and turning unto God, humbly acknowledging their iniquity, and entreating pardon, O this is the thing he would not despise! Yea, it is what he looks and longs for, and upon that would readily forget all past disloyalties, *Jer. iii. 1*; yea, at the sound of their repentings, his bowels would resound with compassion by a secret sympathy and harmony, as one string, well tuned to another, stirs when it is touched; *Jer. xxxi. 18, 20*.

This a sinner shall find in his returning unto God, more than we can express or promise in his name. Oh, he waits to be gracious, meets thee graciously. Yea, he hath first touched thy heart secretly, hath first drawn it towards himself, before it stirred or had a thought that way. Now no more upbraidings or remembrance of all thy wanderings; an act of perfect oblivion is past. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," *Jer. xxxi. 34*. Is thy heart any little softened, and relents it towards him? Then the controversy is ended, and his thoughts are now, how to comfort thee. Art thou busy indicting accusations against thyself? Then makes he it his part to wipe away and blot out. Comest thou home with a heart full of holy shame and grief, and thy mouth full of humble confessions of thy disobedience? Then know, it is thy tender-hearted Father meets thee, most ready to forgive thee, yea, to interrupt thy confessions in the middle with embraces and kisses of love.

But, alas! we preclude ourselves from the sweet experiences of these tender mercies, by the hardness of our

hearts, and by the lightness and vanity of them. O that indignity!—our God still waiting to be gracious, to heap up more of his love to us, but we are busied in other things, and not at leisure to wait on him! O what are they, these things that take us up? Great matters? Alas! sorry trifles all the day long. And when we are at leisure, yet we are not at leisure; for then we must take our ease, must go to sleep, and so still he is put off and forced to retire, after he has stayed till “his head be filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night.”

Observe, secondly, the Lord doth most exactly and wisely measure both the degree and the time of his people's afflictions. Though they have brought them upon themselves, and justly he might leave them so, this he will not do: he is a God of judgment. This is largely and sweetly expressed in a resemblance of husbandry, Isa. xxviii. 24. 9. He knows how much and how long outward or inward trouble is fit for every one; and where the less will serve, will not use the more. He knows what need some spirits have to be bruised and broken beyond others, either under disgrace or poverty, or the proper pressures of the spirit within, apprehensions of wrath, or withdrawments at least of comforts; and hath set his days for deliverance of his church, and of every believer under affliction. So the style of the prophet in that day, speaking as of a certain prefixed day, and that no power or wit of man can disappoint. And it is so chosen, as it shall be evident to be the fittest, that it could not so well either have been sooner or later: all things concurring to make it most seasonable to his people and honourable to his own name. “The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it; it shall come, and shall not tarry.” Hab. ii. 3. That is strange, “Though it tarry, it shall not tarry.” But in the original, there are two words, the one importing an undue slowness or constrained retardment; that cannot be so; “it shall not tarry though it tarry;” that is, though it stay itself and come not

till the appointed time ; so the other word signifies. Thus, Psal. cii. 13, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion ; for the set time is come." Now for this the Lord waits. It is not through want of love, but from abundance of wisdom, that he delivers not sooner. He hath chosen the fittest time, in his all-discerning wisdom ; yet there is in his love an earnest kind of longing that the time were come. Thus here ; "he waits to be gracious," and he "will be exalted," will cheerfully and gladly raise up himself, and appear to show mercy to his people, and bring his enemies low ; coming forth as it were to judgment, and sitting down on his throne. In which posture he was not seen while they prevailed and triumphed, and his church was under their oppression ; but when the time of their restoring and consolation comes, he then is to sit on his throne, and so is exalted to show them mercy. Hence the psalmist so often desires that the Lord would arise, and utters predictions assuring that he will arise, and exciting his people to rejoice in that ; Psal. ix. 7, 8 ; Psal. xcvi. xcvi. xcvi.

Thus the church in her saddest condition, ought hopefully to remember and rest on it, that the day is determined, and cannot fail. Our salvation is in God. He laughs at his enemies ; when they are at the top of prosperity and pride, he sees that their day is coming. Now certainly the firm persuasion of this would much stay our minds ; but either we do not believe, or we do not improve and use these truths, and draw that comfort from them which abounds in them. Our God loses no time : he is waiting till his appointed time ; and if "he waits," it becomes us so to do. That is our duty here "to wait on him." This faith does, and so "makes not haste ;" neither goes out to any undue means, nor frets impatiently within at the deferring of deliverance, but quietly rests on God and waits for him.

This, as it is our duty, is also our happiness, and thus it is here expressed. Upon consideration that "the Lord waits to be gracious, and will be exalted to show mercy,"

the prophet is carried to this exclamation in respect to the happiness of believers, "Oh! blessed are they that wait for him." Their thoughts fall in and meet with his; for he is "waiting" for the same day they "wait for," and if he be not disappointed, they shall not. We are naturally irregular in our affections and notions, and the only right ordering of them is by reducing them to a conformity with the ways and thoughts of God, which keep an unalterable fixed course, as the heavens: the way I say to rectify our thoughts is, to set them by his, as clocks and watches which so readily go wrong, too slow or too fast, are ordered by the sun, which keeps its course. O that we were more careful to set and keep our hearts in attendance on God, winding them up in meditation upon him, and conforming them in their motions and desires to his disposal of all, for all that concerns us, and for the times of all; being quiet, yea glad in this, which the psalmist makes his joy, "My times are in thy hand, O Lord," Psa. xxxi. 15. And surely that is the best. Were I to choose, they should be in no other hands, neither mine own, nor any others. Alas! what silly poor creatures are we! How little do we know what is fit for us in any kind, and still less what time is fit for any mercy to be bestowed upon us! When he withholds mercies or comforts for a season, it is but till the due season; it is but to ripen them for us, which we in childish haste would pluck green, when they would be neither so sweet nor so wholesome. Therefore it is our wisdom and our peace, to resign all things into his hands, to have no will nor desires, but only this, that we may still "wait for him." All shall be well enough, if we but get rid of the vain hopes and expectations of this world. None who indulge them are so well, but they are still waiting for somewhat further. Now amidst all this, our soul may say with David, and speak it to God as known to him, that it is so indeed; "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee:" my expectation or waiting (the same word that

is here) is all placed upon thee. Is it so, brethren? Are our hearts gathered in from other things to this attendance, while most about us are gaping for the wind? Have we laid all up in God, to desire and wait for him, and pretend to nothing beside him?

I would do so, may a soul think, but can I hope that he will look on me, and bestow himself on such a one as I am? To that I say nothing, but look on his word. If thou thinkest that warrant good enough, here it is for thee, that they are certainly blessed that wait for him. This is assurance enough. Never was any one who "waited for him" miserable with disappointment. Whosoever thou art that dost indeed desire him, and desirest to "wait for him," surely thou resolvest to do it in his ways, wherein he is to be found, and wilt not willingly depart from these; that were foolishly to disappoint thyself, and not to be true to thy own end. Therefore look to that; do not keep company with any sin. It may surprise thee sometimes us an enemy, but let it not lodge with thee as a friend.

And mind this other thing—prescribe nothing to God. If thou hast begun to wait, faint not, give not up, wait on still. It were good reason, were it but upon little hope at length to find him; but since it is upon the unfailing assurance, that in the end thou shalt obtain, what folly were it to lose all for want of waiting a little longer? See Psa. xl. 1; "In waiting I waited," waited, and better waited—but all was overpaid: "he did hear me." So Psa. cxxx; "I wait and wait until the morning." These two joined are all, and may well go together, earnest desire and patient attendance.

These words, as others of the prophet which we call consolations, look I conceive beyond the deliverances from outward troubles, to the great promise of the Messiah. Sure I am, the strain of something following is too high for that, and cannot but have an aspect to the days of the gospel, as that ver. 26. Now the Lord had set his time,

that fulness of time, for the coming of the blessed Son in the flesh : and till that time came, the Lord was waiting to be gracious, to open up his treasures more fully than ever before, which when he did, then was he exalted to show mercy, and exalted in showing mercy. Christ himself was lifted up on the cross, there to show that rich mercy that is for ever to be admired. Did he not let us see into his heart, there to read that love that can no otherwise be uttered ? And in that, the Lord was most eminently manifested as a God of judgment ; wisdom, and justice, and mercy, all shining brightest in that contrivance. There he was lift up, and then, after that, lift up into glory, who is the desire of all nations, the salvation and joy of all ages, both before and after. Before he came, they were from one age to another waiting ; and more particularly at the time of his coming, God stirred up the expectation of believers to welcome him being so near ; Luke ii. 25, 38. And in all times, before and after that, he is the happiness of souls, and they only “are blessed that wait for him.” Whether you do, or do not, believe it now, the day is coming when all the world shall know it to be so.

SERMON III.

THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF HEAVENLY WISDOM.

MANY and great are the evils that lodge within the heart of man, and they come forth abundantly both by the tongue and by the hand, yet the heart is not emptied of them; yea the more it vents them outwardly, the more they increase within. Well might he that knew the heart so well call it an evil treasure. We find the prophet Ezekiel, in his eighth chapter, led by the Lord in vision to Jerusalem, to view the sins of the Jews who remained there in the time of the captivity. When he had showed him one abomination, he caused him to dig through the wall, to enter and discover more, and so directed him several times, from one place to another, and still said, "I will show thee yet greater abominations." Thus is it with those whom the Lord leads into an examination of their own hearts, for men are usually strangers to themselves, by the light of his word and Spirit going before them. He lets them see heaps of abominations in every room, and the vilest in the most retired and darkest corners. And truly, should he leave them there, they would despair of remedy. No; he makes this discovery on purpose that they should sue to him for help. Do so then, as many of you as have taken any notice of the evils of your own hearts. Tell the Lord, that those hearts are his own work; "He formed the heart of man within him." And they are his own choice too; "My son, give me thy heart." Entreat him to redress all those abuses wherewith Satan and sin have filled it, and

then to take possession of it himself; for therein consists its happiness. This is or should be a main end of our resortings to his house and service. Wrong not yourselves so far as to turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. What a happiness were it, if every time you come to his solemn worship, some of your strongest sins did receive a new wound, and some of your weakest graces a new strength !

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

“ GOD doth know, that in the day that ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” was the first hissing of that old serpent, by which he poisoned mankind in the root. Man, not contented with the impression of God’s image, in which he was created, lost it by catching at a shadow. Climbing higher than his station, he fell far below it. Seeking to be more than man, to become as God, he made himself less than man. He lodged not a night in honour, but became “like the beasts that perish.” Ever since, Nature’s best wisdom is full of impurity, turbulency, and distemper; nor can any thing rectify it, but a “wisdom from above,” that both cleanseth and composeth the soul : it is “first pure and then peaceable.”

This epistle, as some that follow, is called “general,” both by reason of the dispersion of the parties to whom it is addressed, and the universality of the subject of which it treats; containing a great number, if not all, of the necessary directions and comforts of a Christian’s life, both for the active and the passive part of it. It is evident that the apostle’s main design is, to arm the dispersed Jews against

all kinds of temptations. both those of affliction, in the first chapter, at the 2nd verse, and sinful temptation, verse 13th ; and having discoursed of two special means of strengthening them against both, speaking to God in prayer and hearing God speak in his word, in the two last verses of the first chapter, he recommends, as chief duties of religion and sure evidences of integrity in religion, first, meekness and moderation, chiefly in their speeches, and then charity and purity in their actions ; insisting largely upon the latter, in the second chapter, and upon the former, the ruling of the tongue, in this third chapter : and here towards the end of it, he shows the true opposite springs of miscarriage in speech and action, and of right ordering and regulating of both. Evil conversation, strifes and envyings, are the fruits of a base wisdom that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish ;" but purity, meekness, and mercy, are the proper effects and certain signs of heavenly wisdom.

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure ;" its gentleness can agree with any thing except impurity. Then it is "peaceable ;" it offends no body, except purity offend them ; it is not raging and boisterous. It is not only "pure," being void of that mire and dirt which the wicked are said to cast out like the sea, but "peaceable" likewise, not swelling and restless like the sea, as is said of the wicked. Nor is it only "peaceable" negatively, not offending, but, as the word bears, pacific, disposed to make and seek peace. And as it readily offends none, so it is not easily offended. It is "gentle" and moderate, and, if offended, "easily intreated" to forgive. And as it easily passeth by men's offences, so it doth not pass by, but looks upon their distresses and wants ; as full of compassion, as it is free from unruly and distempered passions. Nor rests it in an affecting sympathy ; its mercy is helpful : "full of mercy and good fruits." And it both forgives, and pities, and gives, "without partiality, and without hypocrisy." The word *ἀνιδίκετος* may as well bear another sense, no less

suiting both with this wisdom and these its other qualities ; that is, not taking upon it a censorious discerning and judging of others. They that have most of this wisdom are least rigid to those that have less of it. I know no better evidence of strength in grace, than to bear much with those that are weak in it. And lastly, as it spares the infirmities of others, so it makes not false and vain shows of its own excellences ; it is “without hypocrisy.” This denies two things, both dissimulation and ostentation. The art of dissembling, or hypocritic craft, is no part of this wisdom. And for the other, ostentation, surely the air of applause is too light a purchase for solid wisdom. The works of this wisdom may be seen, yea, they should be seen, and may possibly be now and then commended ; but they should not be done for that low end, either to be seen or to be commended—surely not, being of so noble extraction. This wisdom, having descended from heaven, will be little careful for the estimation of those that are of the earth, and are but too often of the earth, earthly.

The due order of handling these particulars more fully, cannot well be missed. Doubtless, the subject, “wisdom from above,” requires our first consideration ; next, the excellent qualities that are attributed to it ; and lastly, their order is to be considered, the rather, because so clearly expressed, “first pure, then peaceable,” &c.

“Wisdom from above.” There be two things in this—there is the general term of “wisdom,” common to divers sorts of wisdom, though most eminently and truly belonging to this best wisdom : then there is the birth or original of this wisdom, serving as its difference to specify and distinguish it from all the rest, “wisdom from above.” Wisdom in the general is a very plausible word among men. Who is there that would not willingly pass for wise ? Yea, often those that are least of all such are most desirous to be accounted such : and where this fails them, they usually make up that want in their own conceit and strong opinion.

Nor do men thus love the reputation of wisdom only, but they naturally desire to be wise, as they do to be happy ; yet through corrupt nature's blindness, they do as naturally mistake and fall short both of the one and the other ; and being once wrong, the more progress they make, they are further out of the way, and pretending to wisdom in a false way, they still befool themselves, as the apostle speaks, " Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools."

Our Apostle, ver. 15, speaking of that wicked wisdom that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively to be called wisdom, shows what kind of wisdom it is, by three notable characters, " earthly," " sensual," and " devilish ;" which though they be here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, yet we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an infernal, or " devilish " wisdom, proper for contriving cruelties and oppressions, or subtle shifts and deceits that make atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy : such are those that " devise mischief upon their beds," Mic. ii. 1. This is a serpentine wisdom, not joined with, but most opposite to dove-like simplicity. There is an " earthly " wisdom that draws not so deep in impiety as the other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God and divine matters, and is drawing his eye perpetually downwards, employing him in the pursuit of such things as cannot fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation. " By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches," Ezek. xxviii. 5. This dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of rightly using them, abases men's souls, and indisposes them wholly for this " wisdom that is from above." There is a " sensual " wisdom, far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet no more able to make man holy and happy than they are. " Natural ; " it is the word the apostle

St. Paul useth, 1 Cor. ii. 14, naming the "natural man" by his better part, his soul; intimating that the soul, even in the highest faculty of it, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects. Things that are above it cannot be known but by a "wisdom from above." Nature neither affords this wisdom, nor can it of itself acquire it. This is to advertise us, that we mistake not morality and common knowledge, even of divine things, for "the wisdom that is from above." That may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them; yet is it still as far short of true supernatural wisdom as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more naturally wise he be, the worse he likes it; "If a man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise." 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is nothing gives nature a greater prejudice against religion, than this initial point of self-denial. When men of eminent learning, or the strong politicians hear, that if they will come to Christ, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his, many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

Jesus Christ is that eternal and substantial Wisdom that came from above, to deliver men from perishing in their affected folly, as you find it at large in Prov. viii. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, calls him "the wisdom of God," ver. 24—that shows his excellency in himself; and ver. 30, he tells us that "he is made of God our wisdom"—that shows his usefulness to us. And by him alone is this infused wisdom from above conveyed to us. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and from "his fulness," if at all, "we receive grace for grace;" and of all graces, first some

measures of this wisdom, without which no man can know himself, much less can he know God.

Now this supernatural wisdom hath in it both speculation and prudence; it is contemplative and practical; these two must not be separated. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." This wisdom in its contemplative part reads Christ much, and discovers in him a new world of hidden excellences unknown to this old world. There are "treasures of wisdom in him," but they are "hid," and no eye sees them, but that which is enlightened with this wisdom. No, it is impossible, as one says, "to know divine things while God concealeth them." But when the renewed understanding of a Christian is once initiated into this study, it both grows daily more and more apprehensive, and Christ becomes more communicative of himself, and makes the soul more acquainted with the amiable countenance of his Father in him reconciled. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. What wonder if the unlettered and despised Christian know more of the mysteries of heaven, than the naturalist, though both wise and learned? Christ admits the believer into his bosom, and he is in the bosom of the Father. But withal know, that all this knowledge, though speculatively high, yet descends to practice. As it learns what God is, so it thence teacheth man what he should be. This wisdom flows from heaven, and a heavenly conversation flows from it; as we find it here characterized by those practical graces of purity, peace, meekness.

This wisdom represents to us the purity of God's nature; 1 John iii. 3. It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of purity: as the philosopher said of virtue, to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally persuades, so, by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to Christ by

frequent contemplation, It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience: it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It giveth a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in Christ, and stirs him up to a diligent, though imperfect imitation of them. It sets before us Christ's spotless purity, in whose mouth there was no guile, and so invites us to purity. It represents the perpetual calmness of his spirit, that no tempest can reach to disturb it. In his mouth there was no contentious noise, "his voice was not heard in the streets:" and this recommends peaceableness and gentleness. And so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence, I conceive, may be fitly learned for our use, that seeing here is a due wisdom and knowledge necessary for guidance and direction in the ways of purity and peace, it is evident that gross ignorance cannot consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false superstitious religion stands in need of it—"Not too much scripture wisdom for the people." The pomp of that vain religion, like court masks, shows best by candlelight. Fond nature likes it well. The day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass, for such it must needs be that is born of so black a mother as ignorance, let this wisdom at least be "justified of" those that pretend to be "her children." It is lamentable that amongst us, where knowledge is not withheld, men should, through sloth and love of darkness, deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is amongst the common people! and thence arise uncleanness, and all manner of wickedness: a darkness that both hides and increaseth impurity. What is the reason of so much impiety and iniquity, in all places, but the want of the knowledge of God? "Not knowing God and not obeying his gospel," are joined together, 2 Thess. i. 8. It will be found true, that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge

of Christ. But out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience. And as these two lodge together, so observe what attends them both—He shall come “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished amongst the thickets of ignorance, especially amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this—though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it cannot palliate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand of Divine Justice. As you would escape then that wrath to come, come to wisdom’s school, and how simple soever you be as to this world, if you would not perish with the world, learn to be “wise unto salvation.”

And truly it is mainly important for this effect, that the ministers of the gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, and peaceable, and fruitful, the most expedient way is at once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion; for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly, so long as they are in the dark? One main thing is to be often pointing out the way to Christ, the fountain of this wisdom. Without this, you bid them be clothed, and clothe them not.

How needful then is it, that pastors themselves be “seers” indeed, as the prophets were called of old; not only faithful, but wise dispensers, as our Saviour speaks; that they be able and “apt to teach.” Laudable is the prudence that tries much the churches’ store-houses, the seminaries of learning; but withal it is not to be forgot, that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so it is not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting, that grows not in schools. Except this infused “wisdom from above” season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain common and

unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Amongst other weak pretences to Christ's favour in the last day, this is one, "We have preached in thy name;" yet says Christ, "I never knew you." Surely then they knew not him, and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless, though never so fine and well contrived, must those discourses be, that are of an unknown Christ. Pastors are called angels, and therefore, though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the Fountain, the Head of this pure wisdom.

"Pure." If it come "from above," it must needs be "pure" originally; yea, it is formally "pure" too, being a main trait of God's renewed image in the soul. By this wisdom, the understanding is both refined and strengthened to entertain right conceptions of God in his nature and works. And this is primarily necessary, that the mind be not infected with false opinions in religion. If the spring head be polluted, the streams cannot be pure. This is more important than men usually think, for a good life. But that which I suppose to be here chiefly intended is, that it is effectively and practically "pure: it purifies the heart," (said of "faith," Acts xv. 9,) which in some sense and acceptation differs not much from this wisdom, and consequently the words and actions flow from the heart.

This purity some render "chastity; The wisdom from above is chaste." The word is indeed often so taken, and includes that idea here, but it is too narrow a sense to restrict it to that only. It implies here, a universal detestation of all impurity, both of flesh and spirit, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Pride, self-love, profaneness of spirit, and irreligion, though they do not so properly pollute the body as carnal uncleanness, yet they do not less defile the soul, and make it abominable in the sight of God. Those apostate angels, called "unclean spirits," are incapable of bodily defilement, though indeed they tempt and inveigle men to it: their own inherent pollutions must needs be spiritual,

for they are spirits. Idolatry, in scripture, goes often under the name of fornication and adultery ; and indeed these sins may mutually borrow and lend their names the one to the other : idolatry may well be called spiritual unchastity, and unchaste love, carnal idolatry. Earthly-mindedness, likewise, is an impurity of the soul. In the apostle's phrase, covetousness is idolatry, and so a spiritual pollution ; yea, it may well share with idolatry in its borrowed name, and be called adultery too, for it misbestows the soul's prime affection upon the creature, which by right is God's peculiar due.

This purity that true wisdom works is contrary to all pollution. We know then in some measure what it is : it remains to inquire where it is ; and there is the difficulty. It is far easier to describe it in itself, than to find it among men. " Who can say, I have made my heart clean ? " Look upon the greatest part of mankind, and you may know at first sight, that purity is not to be looked for among them. They suffer it not to come near them, much less to dwell with them and within them. They hate the very semblance of it in others, and themselves delight in intemperance and all manner of licentiousness, like foolish children striving who shall go furthest into the mire. These cannot say, they have made clean their hearts, for all their words and actions will belie them. If you come to the mere moralist, the world's honest man, and ask him, it may be he will tell you, he hath cleansed his heart ; but believe him not. It will appear he is not yet cleansed, because he says he has done it himself ; for, you know there must be some other besides man at this work. Again : rising no higher than nature, he hath none of this heavenly wisdom in him, and therefore is without this purity too. But if you chance to take notice of some well-skilled hypocrite, every thing you meet with makes you almost confident, that there is purity ; yet, if he be strictly put to it, he may make some good account of the pains he hath taken to refine his tongue and

his public actions, but he dares not say he hath made clean his heart. It troubles his peace to be asked the question. He never intended to banish sin, but to retire it to his innermost and best room, that so it might dwell unseen within him; and where then should it lodge but in his heart? Yet possibly because what is outward is so fair, and man cannot look deeper to contradict him, he may embolden himself to say, he is inwardly suitable to his appearance; but there is a day at hand that shall, to his endless shame, at once discover both his secret impurity and his impudence in denying it.

After these there follow a few despised and melancholy persons, at least as to outward appearance, who are almost always hanging down their heads, and complaining of abundant sinfulness. And surely purity cannot be expected in these who are so far from it by their own confession; yet the truth is, that such purity as is here below will either be found to lodge among these or no where. Be not deceived; think not that they who loathe, and, as they can, flee from the unholiness of the world, are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness; but as their perfect purity of justification is by Christ's imputed righteousness, so likewise they well know, and do always acknowledge that their inherent holiness is "from above" too, from the same fountain, Jesus Christ. The wisdom "from above" is pure; this is their engagement to humility, for it excludes vaunting and boasting; and besides that, it is imperfect, troubled and stained with sin, which is enough to keep them humble. Their daily sad experience will not suffer them to be so mistaken: their many faults of infirmity cannot but keep them from this presumptuous fault. There is "a generation," indeed, "that are pure in their own eyes," but they are such as "are not washed from their filthiness." They that are washed, are still bewailing that they again contract so much defilement. The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity.

Therefore I called not this a universal freedom from pollution, but a universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure are daily defiled with many sins, but they cannot be in love with any sin at all, nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sins, which a natural man either sees not to be sin, (though his dim moonlight discovers grosser evils,) or, if he do see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again; they differ in another particular—a natural man may be so far in love with virtue after his manner, as to dislike his own faults and resolve to amend them; but yet he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin, “and to afflict his soul,” as the scripture speaks. The Christian’s repentance goes not so lightly: there is a great deal more work in it. There is not only indignation against impurity, but it proceeds to revenge. The saints we read of in scripture were ashamed of their impurity, but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts and account it folly, yet surely the Christian who delights in purity, seeing he cannot be free from daily sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the past day; yet he knows withal that it is only his Redeemer’s blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not yet fully, cleansed from the pollutions of the world, by the Spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they then who would argue themselves out of this number, because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so sanctified and refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly that the contrary of it, purity, is there; and though its beginnings be small, doubt not, it shall in the end be victorious. The smoking of this flax shows indeed that there is gross matter there, but it witnesseth likewise that there is fire in it too, and though it be little, we have Christ’s own word for it, that it shall

not be quenched ; and if he favour it, no other power shall be able to quench it. You find not indeed absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances, yet if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beat thus, if the main current of your affections be towards purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief, and not as your delight, then take courage ; you are as pure as travellers can be ; and notwithstanding that impure spirit, Satan, and the impurity of your own spirit, vex you daily with temptations, and often foil you, yet in despite of them all, you shall arrive safe at home where perfection dwells.

“The wisdom from above is pure.” Be ashamed, then, of your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness. Especially, seeing God hath reformed and purged his house amongst us, you that are or should be his living temples, remain not unreformed. If you do, church reformation will be so far from profiting you, that, as a clearer light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the Holy Ghost should dwell with you, entertain him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshly pollutions. The word here used doth more particularly signify chastity : and certainly wherever this “wisdom from above” is, this comely grace is one of her attendants. Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not then the good Spirit of God, with actions or speeches, yea, or with thoughts, that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical Babylon, makes itself a cage of unclean birds, and a habitation of filthy spirits ; and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits for ever in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately pure ; that is, “pure in heart,” our

Saviour hath pronounced their begun happiness—"Blessed are they that are pure in heart;" and assured them of full happiness—"for they shall see God." This wisdom is sent from heaven, on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how well their reward is suited to their labour—their frequent contemplating and beholding of God's purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their labouring to be like him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be for ever the pure beholders of that purest object; "They shall see God." What this is, we cannot tell you, nor can you conceive it; but walk heavenwards in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means; "for you shall see him as he is."

SERMON IV.

THE FOLLY OF MAN, AND THE TEACHING OF GOD.

JEREMIAH X. 23, 24.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.

O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

It cannot be expressed, what an advantage a heart acquainted with God hath, in all the revolutions and changes of the world, when it turns unto him, and gives vent to its griefs and desires into his bosom, and so finds ease. This the prophet does here. After the denouncing of a heavy judgment, he turns towards him from whom he brought that message, to entreat for them to whom he brought it. After a very sad close of his sermon, he adds this short but very sweet prayer: presents himself, and speaks in that style, as representing the whole people; "Correct me, O Lord." He makes their calamity, as it were, all his own; bears their person, and presents his petition for them in his own name. The prophets, though they could not but applaud and approve the justice of God who sent them, in the harshest news they brought, yet withal could not be insensible of the miseries of his people; and so we find them mixing pathetic complaints and prayers for them, with the predictions of judgments against them.

And thus are all his faithful ministers affected towards his church. The Lord himself is pleased to express a kind of regret sometimes in the punishing of them; as the

tender-hearted father feels the lashes he lays on, though highly deserved by the stubbornness of his children. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I make thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together;" Hos. xi. 8. So it well becomes his servants to be thus affected when they deliver sad news to his people, to return praying for them; thus going, as angels, betwixt heaven and earth, beseeching the people to return unto God, and beseeching God to return to his people and spare them.

The prophet, in this prayer, first premises a position suiting his purpose, and then upon that presents his supplication. The position he lays down, to make a double benefit of it, in order to his petition. It is both a sure ground for himself to stand on, and a fit argument to move God by. Thus it is, and thus he intends and uses it, at once to support his own faith, and to work on the goodness of God by it. Besides the fitness of the truth itself for both these ends, we find some print of both in the very way of expressing it, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself;" so expressing both his own persuasion of the truth of it, "I know," and representing it to God as a fit truth to urge his suit by, "O Lord, I know."

A great part of the strength and art of prayer lies in this—first, to have the mind furnished with fit conceptions of God, and established in the firm persuasions of them; in that is much of the strength of prayer: then, fitly to call up and use these conceptions and persuasions for our own supporting and prevailing with God; in that lies the art of it.

We possibly think that we do sufficiently believe both the goodness and power of God, especially his power, none suspecting himself of the least doubt of it; yet our perplexing doubts and fears, our feeble staggerings in faith and prayer, upon particular pressing difficulties, discover

evidently a defect here, though still we will not own it. And, alas! how little faculty have we in the most needful times, to rest on his strength, and to stir up ourselves to stir him up by prayer, to do for us, holding firm to that great point of his absolute sovereignty and power over all things, and holding it up to him, entreating him by it to appear and work for us. Lord, it is in thy hand; that I know, and that is enough to me. Thy goodwill I dare trust (for there is implied a secret confidence of that). This contents me, that thou hast full power of the business. That is the thing which here the prophet fixes on. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself;" as there is in us no power to turn off the judgment determined, all our wit and strength can do nothing to that, so we are sure there is no power in our enemies to do any thing either beyond or beside thy appointment in the execution of it. And upon this, Lord, we come to supplicate thee for mitigation. With men it often falls out, either in just punishments or unjust oppressions, that the ministers and under officers do exceed their commission, and overdo their business; yea, sometimes add little less of their own, than all that comes to which is appointed to them. But with thee, O Lord, it is not so. As our enemies cannot stir of themselves without order from thee, and as thy commissions are always all just, so thou seest to the performance, art present at it, which often men cannot be; and so nothing is or can be done beside thy notice and allowance.

I. His position is this, "The way of man is not in himself," and repeated more plainly, "It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps;" thus, by a double negation, putting it altogether out of his power. And under this, the positive truth is couched, that the absolute disposal of all the ways of men is wholly in the supreme hand of God; according to Prov. xx. 24; "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own

way?" He doth not certainly know any thing of his own doings. Even he who seems to know most, to advise and deliberate upon all he does, yet hath no power of his contrivements, knows not which way they will turn till the event doth clear it, and even then, on looking back, is often amazed at the strange course of things, so far different from, and possibly contrary to, all his witty projectings and models. He often does not attain his own, but he never fails to accomplish God's purpose, even when his intentions are least for it, yea, when they are most against it. "Let us build a tower," said they, "lest we be scattered abroad;" and that was the very thing which caused their scattering. Joseph was sold by his brethren, that they might not "bow before him," as he had dreamed; and this brought it to pass. Pharaoh says, "Let us deal wisely;" and that way of oppressing them lest they should go away, both stirred up God to deliver them, and disposed them to depart. And, not to multiply instances, generally in all the ways of men, they have their designs at most times eccentric to God's, but his design holds always, and theirs no further than they are his. Have we not ourselves seen instances of this?

Man consults and determines freely, yet even those inward actings of the mind and will are ordered and framed by the hand of God; and it cannot otherwise be. It is a most vain fancy, to imagine that any thing in this is inconsistent with the natural liberty of the will, or that any such liberty can be in any creature, as consists not with his. But because in these inward actings, man finds himself more at his choice, though all is secretly overruled, and in the event of things God's sovereign disposal is more legible, therefore these two are expressed with some kind of difference, Prov. xvi. 9; "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps;" that is, when he hath devised, that does not carry it: he may devise and fancy things twenty ways, and think

he is taking freely his own course, but he shall find in the issue another hand than his own. "It is not in man that walketh," as the word is here: "he walketh," and yet the direction of his steps is in another hand. But in the devisings too, the Lord so acts upon man, that he is turned which way it pleaseth him. Even the heart, and that of the most uncontrolled, the most impetuous torrent, "the king's heart, is in his hand, as the rivers of waters: he turneth it whithersoever he will;"—Prov. xxi. 1. When men either determine themselves, or follow unallowed ways for determination (as those, Ezek. xxi. 21), yet are they ordered of God. This he does infallibly and uncontrollably, yet in such a way as there is nothing distorted or violented. Things are in their own course, and men are in their voluntary choices; yet all subserving the great Lord, and his ends and his glory, who made them all for himself: as the lower orbs have each their motion, but are all wheeled about with the first. Men know not what he is doing by them, and what in the end he will do with them. With "the rod of Assyria" He scourges his children, and then throws the rod in the fire; Isa. x. 5. 16. The horseleach draws the blood to fill itself, but the physician intends the patient's health. Men are drawn on by temporal prosperings and successes to drive proudly and furiously, till they drive themselves over the edge of the precipice appointed for their ruin; and all his exalting them for a season, is in the end to exalt himself in their greater and more remarkable destruction; "I will get me a name upon Pharaoh, and all his host." Men are busy, consulting or acting with or against one another, and he sits and laughs at their wisest plots. He alone is in all affairs, doing all his own will in heaven and in earth.

O the folly and blindness of men, who think to carry all to their minds, and walk as masters of their own designs, and never have any serious thought of him in whose hands both they and all their business, and all the affairs of states

and kingdoms of this world, are as a piece of wax, to frame them to what he pleases—he who “destroys the counsels of the wise,” and “makes the diviners mad,” who “pours contempt upon princes, leads counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools”—he who hath set limits to all things, to the “raging of the sea,” making the small sand give check to the great ocean; when it “brake out of the womb,” he had a cradle provided for it, and swaddling bands, Job xxxviii; and there, though it rolls to and fro, yet it cannot get out. O it is ignorance of God makes men rush on, and not inquire whether he be with them or no! Moses was wise and stout, and leader of a numerous people, yet he would not stir on other terms: “If thou go not with us, let us not go up hence.” Well, if men will on their peril, be it so; let us reverence God. For even this is for him, and he will gain his glory out of it. “The way of man is not in himself.” If we see their folly, let us learn to be wiser, to keep close to him, and desire his gracious direction of our ways; for it is not in our hands, even when we intend best. And for public affairs, let us rest satisfied in his part. Amidst all disorders, he is ordering all wisely and justly, and, to them who love him, graciously; therefore we ought not to be dismayed. Let us calm our thoughts with this, remember who it is that rules all, and disposes of peace and war, and all affairs, and we cannot wish them in a better hand. I am persuaded, that in all the commotions of the world, when a believer thinks on this, it cannot but calm and compose his spirit exceedingly, “My Father rules all.” Let this so quiet our fears, as that withal it quicken our prayers, and stir us up to the work of this day, repentant humble seeking unto God; seeing all is in his hands, our peace, our liberties, and our enemies that threaten to bereave us of both. O that the effect of all our troubles and dangers were to drive us more to God, to make us throng more about the throne of grace, to draw forth our King for our

help ! O our impenitence and unreformedness ! That turns him to be our enemy, and that only. Men are nothing. And now, in so great straits, yet so little calling on him ! O my brethren, what are we doing ? O pray, pray ! It is our God that commands all, and we may say it upon his own warrant, it is prayer that commands him.

II. The petition ; “Correct me.” When the hand of God is stretched out against a people or a person, certainly there is no running from him. The only wise and safe course, is to run unto him. This the prophet does in behalf of his people, and by his example teaches them so to do. As the prophet utters his own sense and desires in this prayer, so he sets it as a copy to the people of God in time of judgment, to pray by ; shows them the way, which is, not vainly to offer to flee from him, or proudly to stand out against him to their undoing, but to humble themselves under his mighty hand, supplicating him, yielding themselves, and begging quarter. “Correct me, O Lord, with judgment, not in anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.” That I should suffer for my rebellion, there is good reason ; yet, Lord, do not utterly destroy me, which will be if the weight of thine anger fall upon me. And for that, though indeed we have deserved it, yet there is another vent for it, and pardon us to say so, fitter matter for it : “Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen,” ver. 25 ; let it go out that way.—So we see the supplication hath these two particulars in it, an aversion and a diversion ; an aversion of the anger of God from his own people under correction, and a diversion of it upon his and their enemies—Lord, turn from us, and pour it out there. The aversion is presented, qualified with a humble submission, declaring expressly they decline not that correction of God, but only deprecate his consuming anger. “Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment,” that is, with measure ; such as the discretion and love of a father resolves on towards his child, Thus much will I correct him for his good, and no further.

"Not in thine anger." God is pleased to express his displeasure against sin, by wrath and anger, even towards his own children. But the anger which here the prophet entreats exception from, for the church, is anger opposed to judgment, unbounded destroying anger, that knows no limits nor stop but the devouring of those against whom it is kindled. This is spoken in our language, but is to be understood in a way suiting the purity of God. In him truly is no passion at all, much less any that is not ordered by wisdom and judgment. He is not carried in heat beyond his purposed measure, but knows well how far he intends to go with any, and goes no further. But as his anger means his just punishing of sin, so his unlimited anger signifies no other than his just proceeding in punishment, to the utter destruction of inflexible sinners; and to this is opposed here his "correcting with judgment," that is, in a fatherly gracious moderation, such as does not utterly ruin and cut off, but indeed reclaims and converts sinners unto him.

This submission and yieldance to a measured correction, is a thing most reasonable: they that know any thing aright of themselves and God will not refuse it, at least, when reflecting on their own sinfulness, which, when truly discovered, even where there is least, yet there is enough of it to justify even utter destruction. Therefore have we good reason unrepiningly to receive such moderate correction from the hand of God, as he thinks fit, and to wonder that it is no more. It is one true character of repentance under the rod, to accept the punishment of our iniquity, to have our untamed spirits brought low, to stoop to God, to acknowledge our punishment to be far less than our iniquity, and that it is of his goodness "that we are not consumed," as the church confesses, Lam. iii. 22. Though we feel it heavy and the measure hard, yet self-knowledge and conscience of sin will lay the soul low and make it quiet, so that it will say nothing, or if any thing, it will be

confession of its own guiltiness and the righteousness of God; still clearing him in all, as it is in Psal. li. 4; and using that other saying, Psal. cxix. 137, whatsoever is so inflicted, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments;" which words a good king used, being put in prison, and hardly dealt with. So the Psalmist, Psal. xxxviii. 3; "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin." He justifies God's anger by his own sin. Thus Daniel makes confession for the people, under the very captivity here threatened, when it had lasted out the full term; Dan. ix.

And knowing our sin, ought we not to allow God the clearing of his own justice, his purity and hatred of sin, in punishing it? And possibly he will punish sin most exemplarily here, in those who are nearest him, his own people and children. He can least endure it there. We see this especially when we consider his sovereignty and greatness, that he is tied to no account of his actings; and though we did not see so clear reason for our sufferings in our deservings, there is reason enough in his will. And this, well considered, would bring us to much humble submission in all. "I was dumb," says David, "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." The bishop of Troyes, meeting Attila marching towards the city, asked who he was. "I am," said he, "the scourge of God." Upon this, he set open the gates to him; but God marvellously restrained the soldiers in that city.

But yet further, as our own guiltiness and God's righteousness and greatness, plead for this compliance with his chastisements, so even his goodness and our own profit in them. There is in his chastising of his own people, very much mercy, that they "may not be condemned with the world." Their afflictions have a secret stamp of love on them; "By this is the iniquity of Jacob purged." He purifies a people in his furnace that they

may be holy unto him; gives his own many sweet experiences of secret support and comfort in affliction, and seasonable delivery out of it, and brings them forth with advantage; gives them "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." He humbles and purges a people or a person by his rods, and prepares them for greater mercies, to enjoy them both more sweetly and usefully; renews his covenant and the mutual endearments of love betwixt himself and his people, according to the gracious promises made to his people, in relation to this very judgment here threatened, and after inflicted on them. See Isa. liv.; Ezek. xxxvi.

We possibly think it strange that our pressures and troubles still continue, and rather grow upon us than abate; but we judge not wisely concerning this, the most part cursing and repining, others falling into a dead hopeless stupidity, not caring what becomes of things. But our best course were, to turn to him who smites us, to acknowledge our rebellions and his justice, to eye men less and God more in our sufferings, and to confess that our provocations exceed all that is come upon us; to fall down humbly before God, and take submissively his chastisements, saying, "Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment;" and with the church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Mic. vii. 9.

Thus likewise in private personal correctings let us learn to behave ourselves meekly and humbly, as the children of so great and good a Father; whatsoever he inflicts, not to murmur, nor entertain a fretful thought of it. Besides the undutifulness and unseemliness of it, how vain is it! What gain we by struggling and casting up our hand to cast off the rod, but the more lashes? Our only way is, to kneel and fold under his hands, and kiss his rod, and even while he is smiting us, to be blessing him, sending up confessions of his righteousness, and goodness, and faithfulness, only entreating for the turning away of his wrath, though

it should be with the continuing of our affliction. That is here the style of the prophet's prayer, "Correct me, O Lord, but not in anger." And according to this suit, even where troubles are chastisements for sin, yet a child of God may find much sweetness, reading much of God's love in so dealing with him, in not suffering him to grow wanton and forget him, as in much ease even his own children sometimes do. And as they may find much of God's love to them in sharp corrections, they may raise and act much of their love to him in often repeated resignments and submissions of themselves, and ready consenting to, yea, rejoicing in his good pleasure, even in those things which to their flesh and sense are most unpleasant.

Now to the petition, the averting of his anger; that is the great request of them who know and fear him; and there is high reason for it. The heaviest sufferings are light without it, but the least ingredient of that adds inexpressible weight to the smallest affliction. This was the thing, it is likely, which made the visage of death so sad to holy men in Scripture, David and Hezekiah, that in those times it had some character of God's anger against them upon it; came to them as a messenger of displeasure. So a thing small in itself may be a great curse. To be cast out unburied is no great matter. Natural men slight it. There is little difference, to lie eaten of beasts above ground, or of worms beneath. Yet when foretold to a man as a judgment denounced from God, as against that king, Jer. xxii. 19, it hath its own weight, carrying some stamp of God's despising him. And though a man feels it not when it is done, yet he feels it looking on it beforehand, especially as threatened of God; sees himself, as it were, dragged about and torn.

Now, if any little particular cross, marked with God's present anger, becomes so heavy, how much more is his abiding, prolonged wrath, the thing here spoken of; anger to which no bound is set! "That," says he in the name of

his people, "would bring me to nought." There is no standing before it; it will make the stoutest and proudest to shake, yea, shakes them to pieces. If the "wrath of a king" be to meaner men "as the roaring of a lion," how much more terrible, even to kings themselves, is the wrath of God! This great King, whose voice shakes the mountains, and makes the earth to tremble, armies of terrors and deaths are nothing to a look of his angry countenance. "If he withdraws not his anger, the proud helpers stoop under him." The helpers of pride, the great Atlases of the world, who are thought to bear up all—those who, for their wit and power, are thought the supporters of the kingdoms—how soon are they crushed to pieces by a touch of this anger of God, and "perish at the rebuke of his countenance!" "O Lord," says that holy man, Psa. xc. 11, considering the frailty of poor man, and the power of God, "who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath;" full as much, yea, far more terrible than we can apprehend it.

They who dare go on in ways wherein it may be but suspected that he is against them, O they know him not. Let us consider, and fear before him; and, for the land, still entreat the turning away of his wrath, rather than deliverances from any pressures—Lord, while thou thinkest good further to afflict us, so as to draw us nearer to thee, we are content, yea, we will bless thee; but whatsoever thou do with us, suffer not thy hot displeasure to arise against us, for then we are undone. So this is all a soul under his hand, in affliction, ought to say, "Correct me, but not in wrath, lest thou bring me to nothing;" thou knowest I cannot stand before that. He is pleased to look to this, and to express it as that which moderates his anger, even when justly incensed, Isa. lvii. 16; "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." Lord, if thou wilt, how quickly and how easily couldst thou

break into pieces, or sink into nothing, not only me, a little atom of it, but the entire frame of this whole world; and therefore strive not with me. This often Job represents, and God is pleased to move himself to restrain his wrath, and draw forth his mercy by it. His great compassion lays hold on such considerations. See Psa. lxxviii. 38, 39, and Psa. ciii. 14. And this may furnish great confidence to souls under a sense of wrath, that do but fall down and entreat for mercy. He who so often prevents us, when we seek it not, will he cast any one away who seeks and sues for it?

The diversion of this anger relates to the heathen, the professed and obdurate enemies of God and his church. Thy wrath, O Lord, may have its course, and yet spare thy people. There is matter enough for it round about, that is good for nothing else; and good reason for it, besides all other wickedness; their spite and cruelty against thy people; "For they have eaten up Jacob."

Note the character of the ungodly, who are fit fuel for this fire, "That know not and call not on thy name;" that profess not, pretend not to be thine. Tremble, you who are too like these, though reputed amongst the people of God. Seek the knowledge of God, and worship him, families and persons, lest this curse come upon you.

Now this is a prophetic foretelling of the utter destruction of the church's enemies, whereas the church is corrected in measure, and not destroyed. She is first punished; but they that come last, the enemies, the heaviest wrath falls down there, and smothers them, ends on them, and makes "a full end" of them, Jer. xxx. 11. The belief of this may uphold the faithful in the church's greatest distresses. When at the lowest, then the wrath is nearest changing place and removing to her enemies.

And this is to be so desired and prayed for, in reference to the implacable enemies of God, that we beware we mix nothing of our own interest or passion with it. As wrath

in God is without any disturbance, so somewhat like is the desire of it in the godly, a calm undistempered love of the name of God. And so shall the saints rejoice in the final victory and triumph of Christ over all his enemies, and their final ruin in that day when they shall be made his footstool. Then they shall have a pure complacency and delight in his justice ; that shall make all even. And why are we disquieted, if we hope for that day ?

SERMON V.

A SUMMARY OF SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES.

1 COR. i. 30.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

THE great design of the Gospel is to bring men to Jesus Christ; and next to that to instruct those who are brought to him, in the clearest knowledge, and to keep them in the fresh remembrance of the privileges and happiness they have in him. This the apostles, writing to new converts, much insist upon, and Paul most abundantly; but no where more excellently and fully than in these words.

As that is a great and much commended oracle, “Know thyself,” so also there can be nothing more comfortable and profitable for a Christian than this point, to understand his new being, to know himself as out of himself in Christ, to study what he is there. O what joy, what humility, what holiness would it work, were we well seen and much conversant in this subject, viewing ourselves in this light, as here the apostle represents a believer to himself, “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

If we look back a little, we see his aim is to vindicate the doctrine of Christ from contempt in that chief point which is the believer’s greatest comfort and glory, yet lies openest to the world’s misprision, the doctrine of the cross, “Christ crucified.” Him we preach, says he, let men take

it as they please : be he a " stumbling-block to the Jews," and " foolishness to the Gentiles," yet " to them that believe" among both, he is " the power of God and the wisdom of God."

As, in the person of Christ, glory was wrapt up in meanness, so it was in his sufferings and death. And in the doctrine of it and in the way of preaching it, they are not drest with " human wisdom," or " excellency of speech : " this would be as incongruous as that rich gaudy attire they cover the image of the Virgin with and her child lying in a stable. And that all might be suitable, so is it in the persons of those that believe on him. " Brethren, you see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." And God's purpose in this is, " that no flesh should glory before him."

This is the grand disease of the flesh, to swell in conceit of any little advantages real or imagined, forgetting itself and him from whom it receives all, receives its very self, the being it hath, and all superadded good. Now God is pleased, in justice on some and in great mercy to others, so to order most things in the world, as to allay this tumour ; often bringing down high things, and raising the low, and so attempering and levelling disparities, as to take men off from self-glorying. Proud undertakings, we see, are commonly most disgracefully broken. Nor is there any surer presage of the speedy ruin of any affairs or persons, than presumptuous boasting. This is God's work amongst men, as even natural men have observed, to abase high things, to exalt low things. He goes from one thing to another, pulling down the crest and blasting the glory of all human excellency, breaking the likeliest projects, and effecting what is least to be expected, " withdrawing man from his purpose, to hide pride from his eyes," as Elihu speaks, Job xxxiii. 17. To this purpose see Job x. 11, 12 ; 1 Sam. ii. 4, 5 ; and the Virgin in her song, Luke i. 51. Whatsoever men bear themselves big upon and begin to glory in, they

call the hand of God to crush it, raising an idol of jealousy in his sight. All high things have their day : "The day of the Lord shall be on all the cedars of Lebanon, and he alone be exalted;" Isa. ii. 13, 17. If ever this was the case in any time, we may see it legibly in ours, in great letters. This is the very result of his ways, staining the pride of all glory, defeating witty counsels, making counsellors mad, throwing down all plumes, and trampling them in the mire, that no party or persons in the kingdom can set up for any triumph of courage, or wit, or any other excellency, but somewhat shall be clearly seen to meet and dash it in pieces, "that no flesh may glory before him." And this, to souls that love God, is the main happiness of the times, and that wherein they will chiefly rejoice.

The particular here spoken of is eminently suited to this end, the choice and calling of persons to the dignity of Christians; "Not many wise, not many mighty, or noble," but "the mean things, the foolish things," and the most insignificant, "things that are not, nonentities," very nothings, to annul things that seem most to be something. Thus it was in the first times; and though afterwards, by means of these meaner persons, greater were caught and drawn unto Christ, philosophers and kings, yet still it remains true in all times, that predominantly the choice is of the meaner sort; God testifying how little he esteems those things which men account great. Those endowments of wit and eloquence which men admire in some, alas! how poor are they with him! He respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing, in his eyes. He is the author of all these. "Will he esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength." Even wise men admire how little it is that men know, how small a matter lies under the sound of those popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman: how much more doth the all-wise God meanly account of these! He often discovers even to the world

their meanness. He befools them. So valour, or birth, or worldly greatness, these he gives, and gives, as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures, who are looked on as the offscouring and refuse of the world: these are "raised from the dunghill" and "set with princes," made "the sons and daughters of God," entitled each of them to "a crown that fadeth not." O the wonder!

Now they are not puffed up with this, but the more assurance they have, and the clearer their view is of the state they are called to, the more humble they are; still laying these together, What was I in myself? and, What am I in Christ? And in comparing these they are swallowed up with amazement at that love which made this change: and for this very end doth the apostle express thus their estate, "Ye are of him in Christ Jesus."

This is a new being, a creation; for in relation to this being, we are nothing in our state of nature; and then considering, that, in comparison with others, the meanest are often chosen and made partakers of this being, such as have nothing naturally great of nobility, or morality, or high intellectuals, the most nothings are often chosen and made partakers of this being, to illustrate the power of him who makes them exist. In kings, somewhat may be observed of this in their choice of favourites, and raising men who are not of highest deserving, as affecting to show their freedom in choice and their power in making out of nothing, and so they love to have them called their creatures. But these are but shadows: both are poor creatures, both are easily thrown down. But God doth indeed show in his choice, his freedom and power in his new creatures. He draws them out of the lowest bottom of nothing, and raises them to the most excellent kind of being that creatures are capable of, to be "the sons of God, and so heirs, joint heirs with Christ Jesus."

“Ye are of him in Christ Jesus.” This must be taken in an eminent sense. All the creatures are of God; but man, even in his first creation, for the dignity of his being and the slow way of forming him, was accounted to be “of God,” in a peculiar manner; formed to his own likeness, and therefore called “the son of God,” called “his offspring.” But in this new being, much more are we so: we are “of him” as his children, partakers of the Divine nature, and that so fastened that it abideth. And the medium of this excellent and permanent being is primarily to be considered; for in him it becomes so. It is both high and firm, being in the essential Son, as the foundation of it; therefore here expressed, as bearing the whole weight of this happy fabric.

“Of him, ye are in Christ Jesus.” The life which believers derive from God is through him. He is that eternal Word, by which all things were made in their first creation, and do still subsist. And he is made the basis of the second creation in a wonderful way, becoming himself a creature: and so the root of the new progeny is from Heaven, “the sons of God:” so it follows in both these scriptures, John i. 12, 14; “The Word was made flesh,” and so, they that “receive him” are made “the sons of God;” and so, Heb. ii. 10, 11, amply and excellently is that mystery unfolded. The first frame of man, at least the excellency and beauty of it, was broken by his fall; therefore a new model is framed of a selected number, to be a new world, more firm than the former, united unto God so closely as never to be severed again. Man, though he was made holy and godlike, continued not in that honour. Now God himself becomes a man, to make all sure: that is the foundation of an indissoluble union. Man is knit to God in the person of Christ so closely, that there is no possibility of dividing them any more: and this union of our nature in his person is made the ground of the union of our persons with God. We find our own flesh catch hold in

Christ of a man, and in that man may find God, and are made one with him by faith in Christ. And this all the powers of hell cannot dissolve. Our life none can cut off from his, any more than a man can cut a beam from off the sun. We are and subsist of God in Christ. This is an unknown mystery, but were it known, it would prove a depth of rich inexhaustible consolation. The world doth not know what Christians are. This is no wonder; for truly they know not themselves, or but very little. How would it elevate their spirits, but not in pride! O nothing is more humbling than this, as the apostle here implies! But it would raise them above the world, and suit their desires and their actions to their condition, having all under foot that the world counts great, walking as heirs of heaven, led and moved by the Spirit of Christ in them; thinking when solicited to any base way, How doth this become the sons of God? Shall one who lives in Christ degrade him so much as to borrow comfort or pleasure from any sin, for the killing and destruction whereof he laid down his precious life?

O my brethren, that this divine ambition were kindled in your breasts, to partake of this high and happy being, and leave all your pursuits to follow this, restless till you be in Christ! For solid abiding rest, sure I am, out of him there is none. And then, being in him, remember where you are and what you are. "Walk in Christ," and live like him, as one with him indeed. Let his thoughts and desires be yours. What was his work, yea, what his refreshment, his meat and drink? To do his Father's will. O when shall we find ourselves so minded, as the apostle's word is, "the same mind in us that was in Christ?"

"Who of God is made unto us wisdom. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning." It was not an accidental after device in God, for in him there can be no such thing, but it was his great forethought project, out of the ruins of man's first estate, to raise a fairer and firmer

fabric, new from the very foundation. And in the new foundation lies the model, and excellency, and stability of the whole structure. This is the choicest of all his works, wherein he chiefly glories; his masterpiece, which great angels admire; and this is it, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." And this is one letter of his name. He is called "Wonderful," who is here spoken of; so all is wonderful in this work: "wonderful," first, that he should be made any thing, the Maker of all things himself made something which before he was not; then, "made to us"—that he should be made any thing to our interest and advantage, who are a company of traitors; and "made unto us of God," the God against whom we rebelled and continued natural enemies! The purpose was bred in the Father's own breast, to give out his Son from thence to recover us and bring us back. O astonishing depth of love! Then, "made unto us" what? Rather what not? We are made up in him for ever rich and happy, he being made all unto us, all we need or can desire, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Without him, we are undone, forlorn caitiffs, masses of misery, as you say, having nothing either in us or on us, nothing but poverty and wretchedness, blindness, and nakedness, altogether ignorant of the way to happiness, yea, ignorant of our very misery; a nest of fools, natural fools, children of folly (as they who are renewed by and provided with this wisdom, are called "children of wisdom"), guilty, filthy, condemned slaves.

This is the goodly posture we are in out of Christ; yet who is sensible of it? How few can be brought to serious thoughts about it! Nay, are not the most, in the midst of this misery, yet full of high conceits of their worth, wit, freedom?—as frantic bedlamites, lying naked and filthy in their chains, yet dream they are great and wise persons, commanding and ordering all about them; fancying, possibly, that they are kings, a stick in their hands a sceptre,

and their irons chains of gold. This is a pleasing madness for the time: yet who does not pity it that looks on?

Methinks I see one of this sort, when I see one evidently destitute of Christ, bearing himself big upon the fancy of his parts, and birth, and riches, or stoutness; see such, upon any cross word, swelling against others, threatening high, and protesting they will be slaves to none; not knowing that even while they speak thus they are wretched caitiffs under the hardest and basest kind of slavery. Inquire, my brethren, if ever you had a right and clear view of your natural misery; otherwise you are, it is likely, still in it, and though you profess to believe in Christ, are not yet gone out of yourselves to him, and not knowing your great need of him, do certainly little esteem and make little use of him. "You are full, and reign without him;" all is well and in quiet; but it is owing to the "strong man's" yet possessing the house, and keeping you his captives as quiet as he can, that you look not out or cry for a deliverer. He is afraid of him, to be dispossessed and turned out by him who is stronger, the mighty Redeemer that came out of Zion. O that many amongst you were crying to him, and waiting for him, to come unto you for your rescue!

"Made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." To supply and help all, he is our magazine whither to have recourse to: for this end he is replenished with "all the fulness of God," the very "fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, the Spirit being not given to him by measure." He is fit to be "made our wisdom," who is "the wisdom of the Father;" as here in this place the apostle lately called him, "the wisdom of God. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." They that find him, and come unto him, find it so; but the most look but on the surface; they hear his name, and know not what is under it.

"Made unto us righteousness," by fulfilling the whole law and "all righteousness," and yet suffering the rigour of it,

as if he had transgressed it. No guile, no spot was found on him : he was " holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and yet the greatest sinner by imputation ; " The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." And so in Psalm xl. 12, which is prophesied of him ; " Mine iniquities have taken hold on me." He owns them as his, though not his. He endured all that justice could require, entered and paid the debt, and is acquitted and set free again, and " exalted at the right hand of God." So it is evident that he is " righteous," even in that representative and sponsorial person he put on.

" Sanctification." Christ is a living spring of that ; " anointed above his fellows." In him is no mixture of any iniquity. The Holy Ghost descended on the apostles in the shape of fire ; there was somewhat to be purged in them ; they were to be quickened and enabled by it for their calling. But on him it descended as a dove : there was no need of cleansing or purging out any thing. That was a symbol of the spotless purity of his nature, and of the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in him.

" And redemption." Christ is mighty to save, and having a right to save ; a kinsman, a brother. And as he hath bought freedom for sinners, so he will put them in possession of it, will effect and complete it. All that are in him are really delivered from the power of sin and death, and shall ere long be perfectly and fully so : they shall be lifted up above them, no longer to be molested with any remainders of either, or with the fear of them, or so much as any grief for them. And that day is called " the day of redemption," to which we are beforehand made sure and " sealed by the Spirit."

We cannot then doubt of his fitness and fulness to be these, and these " for us ;" but withal we must know that he is designed so to be " made unto us," and that he came and did and suffered all for this purpose, and having done, returned, and now lives to be these to us. It is his place

and office, and so his delight; he loves to be put upon the performance of this, to be their "wisdom and righteousness." "Made of God to us." It is agreed betwixt the Father and him, that he should be so. He is "the wisdom of God," and "made of God our wisdom." Wonderful, that the same which is "his own wisdom," and no less, he would make ours! And now under a sense of all our ignorances and follies, it becomes us to go to him, to apply ourselves to him, and apply him to us. He is called our "Head," and called so most fitly, for it is the place of all our wisdom; that lies in our head. And so, as to all the rest, "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." If he be "righteousness" in himself, and holy, and victor over his enemies, and set free from wrath and death, then are we so too in him; for he is ours, and so ours that we become what he is, are inrighted to all he hath, and endowed with all his goods; though poor and base in ourselves, yet married to him: that is the title. We are made rich, and noble, and free, we are righteous and holy, because he is. "The wife shines with the rays of her husband." All debts and pleas are taken off, he stands betwixt us and all hazard, and in him we stand acquitted and justified before God.

That which makes up the match, and ties the knot of this union, is faith. "He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is tendered and held out as all these, in the promise of the Gospel; not only declared to be really furnished and fit so to be, but offered to be so, and we warranted, yea, invited and entreated, to receive him as such. But he is effectually "made" to be this "to us," by believing, the promise being brought home and applied of God, and faith wrought in the heart to entertain, and unite to him. Faith closes the bargain, and makes him ours. Now, in that he is "made unto us," not of ourselves, but "of God," for that is his gift and work. We cannot believe, any more than we can fulfil the whole law. And though men think it a common

and easy thing to accept of so sweet an offer at so cheap a rate, nothing being required but to receive him, yet this is a thing that naturally all refuse. "No man cometh unto me," says he, "except the Father draw him." Though men be besought to come, yet the most "will not come unto" him, "that they may have life." "To as many as received him, he gave the privilege to become the sons of God," and yet, for all that, many did not receive him; yea, as there it is expressed, "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." They who were nearest to him in natural relation and interest, yet refused him for the most part, and attained not this blessed spiritual interest in him unto life.

It should be considered, my brethren, Christ is daily held out, and none are excluded or excepted, all are invited, be they what they will, who have need of him and use for him; and yet who is persuaded? Oh, "who hath believed our report?" One hath his farm, another his oxen, each some engagement or another. Men are not at leisure for Christ. Why? You think, may be, you have received him. If it be so, you are happy. Be not deluded. Have you received him? Do you find him then living and ruling within you? Are your eyes upon him? Do you wait on him early and late, to see what his will is? Is your soul glad in him? Can you in distress, sickness, or poverty, cleave to him, and find him sweet, and allay all with this thought, However things go with me, yet Christ is in me? Doth your heart cleave to him? Certainly if he be in you, it will be thus; or, at least, your most earnest desire will be that it may be thus.

Men will not believe how hard a matter it is to believe the fulness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, till they be put to it in earnest to make use of him, and then they find it. When sin and death are set before their view and discovered in their native colours unto the soul, when a man is driven to that, "What shall I do to be saved?" then, then is the time to know what notion he hath of Christ.

And as the difficulty lies in this, in the first awakening of the conscience from sin, so in after times of temptation and apprehension of wrath, when, upon some new added guiltiness or a new sight of the old, in a frightful manner, "sin revives and the soul dies," it is struck dead with the terrors of the law—then to keep thy hold, and find another life in Christ, the law and justice satisfied, and so the conscience quieted in him, this is indeed to believe.

It is a thing of huge difficulty to bring men to a sense of their natural misery, to see that they have need of a saviour, and to look out for one: but then, being brought to that, it is no less, if not more difficult, to persuade them that Christ is he; that, as they have need of him, so they need no more, he being able and sufficient for them. All the waverings and fears of misbelieving minds do spring from dark and narrow apprehensions of Jesus Christ. All the doubt is not of their interest as they imagine: they who say so, and think it is so, do not perceive the bottom and root of their own malady. They say they do no whit doubt but that he is able enough, and his righteousness large enough, but that all the doubt is, If he belong to me. Now, I say, this doubt arises from a defect and doubt of the former wherein you suspect it not. Why doubtest thou that he belongs to thee? Dost thou flee to him as lost and undone in thyself? Dost thou renounce all that can be called thine, and seek thy life in him? Then he is thine. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." Oh but I find so much, not only former, but still daily renewed and increasing guiltiness. Why, is he a sufficient Saviour, or is he not? If thou dost say he is not, then it is manifest that here lies the defect and mistake. If thou sayest he is, then hast thou answered all thy objections of that kind: much guiltiness, much or little, old or new, neither helps nor hinders, as to thy interest in him and salvation by him. And for dispelling of these mists, nothing can be more effectual than the letting in of those gospel beams, the

clear expressions of his riches and fulness in the Scriptures, and eminently this, "Made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

"Wisdom," both objectively and effectively—objectively, I mean, our wisdom, as all our wisdom lies in the right knowledge and apprehension of him. And this suits to the apostle's present discourse. The Jews would have a sign, and the Gentiles wisdom; but "We," says he, "preach Christ. I determined to know nothing, save Christ crucified." He was learnedly bred, and knew many things besides, much of nature, and much of the law; but all this was to him obsolete, useless stuff; it was as if he never had heard of or known any thing else but Jesus Christ. We may know other things, but this and this only is our wisdom, "to know him, and him crucified." Particularly we may have knowledge of the law, and by it the knowledge of sin; but in relation to our standing before God, and so our happiness, which is the greatest point of wisdom, Jesus Christ is alone and is all. And the more firmly a soul eyes Christ, and loses all other knowledge and itself in contemplating him, the more truly wise and heavenly it is.

And effectively he is our wisdom. All our right knowledge of him and belief in him flow from himself, are derived from him, and sent into our souls. His Spirit is conveyed into ours; a beam of himself, as of the sun. This sun of righteousness is not seen but by his own light; so that every soul that is made wise unto salvation, that is brought to apprehend Christ, to cleave to him and repose on him, it is by an emission of divine light from himself that shows him and leads unto him. And so we know God in him. There is no right knowledge of the Father but in the Son. God dwelling in the man Christ, will be found or known no where else; and they that consider and worship God out of Christ, do not know or worship the true God, but a false notion and fancy of their own.

The Shechinah, the habitation of the majesty is Jesus Christ: there he dwells as between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. To apprehend God so as to love him and trust in him all our life, to hope to find favour and bliss with him, this is the only wise knowledge of him. Now this alone is in Christ, and from him. He contains this representation of God and gives his own light to see it. So that a Christian's desire should be in relation to Jesus Christ, that of David in reference to the temple, as a figure of him, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord;" that I may get into Christ, to know God there, "to behold the beauty of the Lord." There we see beauty indeed, the Father's glory, and so as "our Father" reconciled to us, we see him "merciful and gracious." And as we should desire "to behold," so still "to inquire in his temple," to advance in the knowledge of God studying him in Christ. We are to admire what we see, and to seek still to see more. And know, that this knowledge of God, as we have it in Christ, so it is from him. He reveals the Father, he came from his bosom for that purpose. We cannot believe on him, cannot come near God through him, but as he lets forth of his light to conduct and lead us in, yea, powerfully to draw in, for his light does so. Now knowing and apprehending him by his own light, his Spirit, the apostle clears it, that this is our wisdom, by those rich titles added, according to which we find him to us, when we receive from him that wisdom by which we apprehend him aright and lay hold on him, then "made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

"Righteousness." This doubtless is meant of the righteousness by which we are justified before God. And he is "made this to us:" applied by faith, his righteousness becomes ours. That exchange made, our sins are laid over upon him, and his obedience put upon us. This is the great glad tidings, that we are made righteous by

Christ. It is not a righteousness wrought by us, but given to us, and put upon us. This, carnal reason cannot comprehend, and being proud, therefore rejects and argues against it; it says, "How can this thing be?" But faith closes with it, and rejoices in it. Without either doing or suffering, the sinner is acquitted and justified, and stands as guiltless of breach, yea, as having fulfilled the whole law. And happy those who thus fasten upon this righteousness! They may lift up their faces with gladness and boldness before God; whereas the most industrious self-saving justiciary, though in other men's eyes, and his own possibly, for the present, he makes a glittering show, yet when he shall come to be examined of God, and tried according to the law, he shall be covered with shame, and confounded in his folly and guiltiness. But faith triumphs over self-unworthiness, and sin, and death, and the law, shrouding the soul under the mantle of Jesus Christ; and there it is safe. All accusations fall off, having no where to fasten unless some blemish could be found in that righteousness in which faith hath wrapt itself. This is the very spring of solid peace, and fills the soul with peace and joy. But still men would have something within themselves to make out the matter, as if this robe needed any such piecing; and not finding what they desire, thence disquiet and unsettlement of mind arise.

True it is, that this faith purifies the heart, and works holiness, and all graces flow from it; but in this work of justifying the sinner, it is alone, and cannot admit of any mixture; as Luther's resemblance is, "Faith is as the bride with Christ in the bedchamber alone; but when she cometh forth, hath the attendance and train of other graces with her." This well understood, the soul that believes on Jesus Christ will not let go for all deficiency in itself; and yet so resting on him, will not be slothful nor regardless of any duty of holiness. Yea, this is the way to abound in

all the fruits of the Spirit, first to have that "wisdom" from him rightly to apprehend and apply him as our "righteousness," and then shall we find all furniture of grace in him; he will likewise be "sanctification." Say not, Unless I find some measure of sanctification, what right have I to apply him as my righteousness? This inverts the order, and disappoints thee of both. Thou must first, without finding, yea, or seeking any thing in thyself but misery and guiltiness, lay hold on him as thy righteousness; or else thou wilt never find sanctification by any other endeavour or pursuit.

He it is that is "made sanctification to us," and out of him we seek it in vain. Now first he must be "thy righteousness," before thou find him "thy sanctification." Simply, as a guilty sinner, thou must flee to him for shelter; and then, being come in, thou shalt be furnished out of his fulness with "grace for grace;" as a poor man pursued by the justiciary, fleeing to a strong castle for safety, and being in it, finds it a rich palace, and all his wants supplied there.

This misunderstanding of that method is the cause of that darkness and discomfort, and withal of that deadness and defect of graces, that many persons go drooping under, who will not take this way, the only straight and sure way of life and comfort.

Now "sanctification" he is to us, not only as a perfect pattern, but as a powerful principle. It is really the Spirit of Christ in a believer, that crucifies the world, and purges out sin, and forms the soul to his likeness. It is impossible to be holy, not being in him; and being truly in him, it is as impossible not to be holy. Our turmoiling without him makes us lose our labour; and in this point indeed, little wit makes much labour.

"Redemption." Sin is often prevailing even in believers, and therewithal discomforts and doubts arising, as it cannot otherwise be. O how do they groan and sigh as

captives still to the law of sin and death ! Well, there is in our Lord Jesus help for that too. He is "redemption;" that is the complement and fulness of deliverance. The price he paid once for all : now he goes on to work that deliverance by conquest, which he bought by ransom. It is going on even when we feel it not, and within a little while, it shall be perfected, and we shall see all the host of our enemies who pursued us, as Israel saw the Egyptians, lie dead upon the shore. Courage ! that day is coming.

And all this is, "That he that glories, may glory in the Lord." Is it not reasonable ? No self-glorying : the more faith, the less will there be still of that. A believer is nothing in himself. All is Christ's, Christ is his all. That treasurer who, being called to an account, because that out of nothing he had enriched himself suddenly, many thought he would have been puzzled with it ; but he, without being much moved, next morning came before the king in an old suit that he wore before he got that office, and said, "Sir, this suit on my back is mine, but all the rest is thine." So our old suit is ours, all the rest Christ's, and he allows it well. And in the full and pure glory that ascends to God in this work, are we to rejoice more than in the work itself as our salvation. There is a humble kind of boasting that becomes a Christian. "My soul shall glory," or "make her boast, in God," says David, "all the day long." What was I before I met with Christ, thinks a believer, and now what am I ? And, upon that thought, he wonders and loves. But most of the wonder is yet to come : for he conceives but little "what we shall be."

S E R M O N VI.

THE NAME OF JESUS FRAGRANT.

[Preached after the administration of the Lord's Supper.]

“BLESSED are they that dwell in thy house,” saith the Psalmist; and he adds this reason: “They will be still praising thee.” There is indeed always in God’s house both fit opportunity and plentiful matter of his praises. But the greater number of those that frequent his house do not dwell in it; their delight and affection is not there. Therefore they cannot praise him. They come in as strangers, and have no skill in the songs of praise. Yea, and the very children of the family, who worship in spirit and in truth, find their instruments, their hearts, very often quite out of tune for praises, and sometimes most of all when praises are requisite. They find still such abundant cause of complaint in themselves weighing down their spirits that they can hardly at all wind them up to magnify that God whose mercy is far more abundant. If we would take a reflex view, and look back upon our carriage this day in the presence of our God, who is there among us that would not find much work for sad thoughts? Would not one find that he had a hard and stony heart; another, a light, inconstant, wandering heart to complain of; a third, an unbelieving heart; and some, all of these? And they, if such there be, who have both deeply sorrowed and been largely comforted, will possibly, for all that, upon former

sad experience, be full of fears and jealousies, that this sweet temper will not be of long continuance : that before long the world or some lust will find or make a way to creep in, and banish those heavenly thoughts, and trouble that peace and joy which accompanies them. Yet notwithstanding all these causes of grief or fear, our causes of praise are both more and greater. And it is no reason that the sense of our own evil should prejudice that acknowledgment of God's goodness ; yea, rather it should stir us up to extol it so much the more. Cease not to bemoan the evils of your own hearts ; but withal forget not to magnify the riches of his grace, who hath given himself for you and to you. These two will not hinder one another, but the due intermixture of them will make a very good harmony. And the fruit of them will be this—you will have still more cause to praise and less to complain. When the Lord shall find you humble acknowledgers of his grace, he will delight to bestow more grace upon you, and will subdue those iniquities for you, which you cannot. And though he is pleased to do it but gradually, by little and little, yet in the end, the conquest shall be full : and then he who is “ the author and the finisher of your faith,” though it is his own work, yet because it is done in you, he shall account the victory yours, as obtained by you, and give you as conquerors the crown of glory. “ To him that overcometh,” saith he, “ will I give to sit with me in my throne.”

There is nothing here but from free grace. The courage and strength to fight in this spiritual warfare, the victory by fighting, and the crown by victory, flow all from this fountain. “ In all these things, we are more than conquerors,” saith the apostle—but how ? “ through him that loved us.” Therefore if we desire to be such, let us humble ourselves before the throne of grace, entreating both for grace and glory in the name of Christ, our Mediator.

CANT. i. 3.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

The natural workings and desires of things are agreeable to their being. The beasts, according to their sensitive life, seek those things that tend to the good and preservation of that life, and affect nothing higher than those, and they are satisfied. Man, except such men as are in the lowest stage and border upon the beasts, finds nature, even corrupt nature, raising him to higher desires and designs. And yet of the best of them the apostle's maxim holds true, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh:" and yet he subjoins the excellency of some men beyond the best naturalist; "They that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. They cannot be confined to things natural, but are strongly moved towards spiritual blessings, and towards Christ the sum of them; and having once tasted of his sweetness, they can say, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is an ointment poured forth." They that are elevated to a supernatural being can admit nothing into competition with his love; and this it is that lies under these words.

Numbers have promiscuously been his guests at this time, and the greatest number think they came to good purpose; but know that you are so far from partaking of Christ in the sacrament, that you have not so much as smelt his perfumes, if you be not strongly taken with his love. Great are the praises, and many the duties you owe him for rich favours; and therefore show your good will and endeavour some payment. But know that none of them are current, except they be stamped with love. If you love not, you do nothing. All your labours and services without it, are as so many cyphers, they amount to just nothing; and with it, the meanest of them will find acceptance.

You have briefly in the words Christ's loveliness and the Christian's love, the former the cause of the latter; both couched under borrowed terms, according to the whole strain of this allegorical song, on which the true experimental knowledge of this divine love is the best commentary.

In all love three things are necessary—1, some goodness in the object, either true and real, or apparent and seeming to be so; for the soul, be it never so evil, can affect nothing but what it takes some way to be good; 2, there must be a knowledge of that goodness; for the most excellent things, if altogether unknown, affect not; 3, there must be a suitableness or agreement of that good thing with the nature of those who should affect it; otherwise, indeed, how good soever it be, it is not good to them.

Now all these we have clearly in this love. I. The goodness, the excellency of Christ, expressed by "precious ointments;" II. The manifestation and making of it known, signified by "the pouring forth of his name;" III. His fitness and congruity with them who are here mentioned under this denomination, "virgins;" such as have the senses of their souls not stopped with the pollutions of the world, but pure and active, and therefore, as the apostle speaks, "exercised to discern good and evil." These three requisites thus happily met must needs produce love; "therefore the virgins love thee."

I. The excellency of the object; "Because of the savour of thy good ointments." How true is the apostle's word, when he calls Christ the believer's "all things!" And that radical grace of faith, because it apprehends Christ, hath a kind of universality: and it is reasonable too, it alone being to the soul what all the five senses are to the body. It is the eye, and the mouth; a wonderful eye, it "sees him who is invisible;" the mouth, "it tastes that the Lord is gracious;" yea, take these two both together in one place, Psal. xxxiv. 8; "O! taste, and see that the Lord is good."

It is the soul's ear ; for what else is meant, when it is said, " He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear ? " And was it not that touch which Christ took special notice of, and with good reason distinguished from the common touch of the multitude that was crowding about him ? That touch alone draws virtue from him ; " Some one hath touched me, for there is virtue gone out of me." And lastly, as it is all those other senses, and Christ is its object in reference to them all, so here, in its smelling, it finds the savour of his fragrant graces, and by that works love ; " Because of the savour of thy precious ointments."

What strange odds is there betwixt the opinion of Christ's spouse, and that of the world who know him not ! They wonder what she sees in him desirable ; she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellences. They prefer the basest vanities in the world before him ; she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this " song " how busily and skilfully she goes to all the creatures, and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her well-beloved, and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while, she extols him above all things beautiful and pleasant to the eye ; another while, above things delectable to the taste, as in the former verse, " Thy love is better than wine ; " and here she prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit, of the Lord's Supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many of you that come to it and partake of it with others, who prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it as you look for. But, O ! what precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet ! How richly is the table furnished to his eye ! What plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste ! what abundance of rare dainties ! Yet there is nothing but One here ; but that One is

all things to the believing soul. It finds his love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odours to the smell; and that delightful word of his, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," is the only music to a distressed conscience.

"Thy good ointments." The holy ointment of the sanctuary, under the law, was composed according to God's own prescription; *Exod. xxx. 25*. And they were straitly forbid to imitate it or make any like it, to signify the singular holiness, the matchless worth of the anointing "oil of gladness," wherewith our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, was "anointed above his fellows." And in this he is incomparable, that his ointment he hath not from without. It was his own Divine nature that perfumed his manhood with these precious ointments. God and the Spirit of the Lord, are said to have anointed him; *Psalm xlv. 7*; "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;" and *Isa. lxi. 1*; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." But know, that this Spirit and the Father are one in essence with the eternal Son. In that mystical song much like to this, the 45th Psalm, it is said, his "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," as he comes forth "out of his ivory palaces." When he came down from his glorious court above to dwell among men, he apparelled himself like them: he was clothed with human flesh; but yet that vesture was so transcendently enriched with all graces, as with costly perfumes, that men might easily know there was more under them than a mere man. Yea, even in that low estate did such beams of his glory shine through, that all whose eyes were open, did clearly behold them, and know him to be no less than the only begotten Son of God, by this, that he was "so full of grace and truth." And these are, in a word, the precious ointments whose delightful smell is here commended.

Now, to enumerate and describe these graces, what

tongue of men, yea, or of angels were sufficient? What other is the main subject of the whole Scriptures? What mean all the figures and ceremonies of the law, the costly furniture and ornaments of the temple, the rich vestments of the high priest, that fine linen, that silk and gold, those gems and precious stones? Was any one of them, were they all, any other than shadows and dim resemblances of the matchless perfections of Jesus Christ? It is strange, that Christians have so low conceits of their high Redeemer. What is the Gospel, but a more clear and plentiful pouring forth of those ointments? What was the great labour and business of the holy apostles, but the diffusing of Christ's graces through the world? "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," says Saint Paul to his Corinthians. What is that other sacrament and this, but coverts under which Christ conveys himself and his graces to the believing soul, while the profane and slight hearted receivers are sent away with empty elements? Thus you see how ample a subject these graces are in the general. And truly, the consideration of any one particular of them, might be the employment of many hours. Would you hear of the "wisdom of Christ?" Look what the apostle says of it, Col. ii. 3; "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" not some drops of wisdom, no, nor streams, but a fountain; not one treasure, but treasures, many treasures, yea, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" yet, not obvious to every eye, but, as treasures are, "hid." The children of wisdom, who are the world's fools, have some knowledge of this his wisdom, and draw from it for their own use; but to sound the depth of it, who can be able?

No less admirable is his holiness. He is both the immaculate Lamb, and the undefiled sacrifice. "Such a High Priest became us," Heb. vii. 26—became us! Yes, "holy, harmless, and undefiled:" the more we were defiled with sin, the more stood we in need of an undefiled and spotless

High Priest. It was as expedient that he should be unlike us in that, as that he should be like us in all other things. Therefore, as for the legal priesthood there was a holy consecrating oil, so this immortal High Priest was anointed with most entire and complete holiness. And this perfect holiness of his is set forth as myrrh, the best ointments and spices ; myrrh which is of a virtue preservative from corruption. He was not only of excellent smell while he lived among men, but this myrrh did likewise preserve and exempt him from contracting any corruption or pollution, by the bad air of sinful company ; so that he conversed with sinners, that he might convert them, without any danger of infection.

And as he was thus extraordinarily anointed with the spirit of wisdom and holiness, so likewise with the spirit of meekness ; therefore he is called "The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." His "voice was not heard in the streets." And take in that other grace which he himself mentions together with his meekness, as being near in nature to it, humility ; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Indeed humility is an odoriferous grace. It is a gracing grace ; it adds a kind of sweetness and lustre to all other graces ; yea, it serves singularly as a character for the trial of the truth of all other graces. As balsam, which is the chief of precious ointments, used to be tried—that is the truest and best, which, put into any liquor, goes to the bottom ; that but slight which swims above—so those graces are most upright, that are accompanied with most humility. And that this may be out of doubt, you know that Jesus Christ, of whom we now speak, as he had most grace, so was he most exemplary in humility. And certainly the sweet smell of this good ointment did "fill the whole house," when he washed his disciples' feet ; as is said of the ointment that Mary poured upon his feet, in the foregoing chapter, John xii.

Amongst many other of his gracious qualities that might

be mentioned, there is one we cannot but take particular notice of, his love ; the rather, because the fragrant smell of his graces is here said to beget love. Now you know that one of the strongest attractives of love is love. What made him empty himself of his glory, as the apostle speaks, but because he was full of love ? What made him take on him the form of a servant, suffer heat, and cold, and hunger, and poverty, but love ? What else was it made him digest the persecutions, revilings, and the contradiction of sinners, but love ? But the great wonder of his love is this, he died to become our life. “ Who hath loved me, and given himself for me,” says the great apostle St. Paul ; and, “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,” says the beloved apostle St. John. Was it the nails that held him fast to the cross, when they tauntingly bid him come down ? No ; it was his love, that was stronger than death. But all this was nothing to the angry countenance of his Father, nor would he ever have ventured upon that, if infinite love had not persuaded him. No wonder if the apostle call it a love that passeth knowledge ; “ That you may know,” saith he, “ the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” Know it we may and should, but we must know withal, that we cannot know it fully. And this is our comfort, that it is greater than we can comprehend ; for if it were not so, it would be less than we stand in need of. So much of his love we may understand, as may abundantly inflame our hearts with love to him. For this purpose hath he revealed it, and made his “ name like ointment poured out.”

II. And that is the second thing, “ his name ;” that is, the report and manifestation of his excellences. And if you will take it properly of his name, Jesus, and Christ, or the Messiah, it is true of them, for they are significative of these excellences. Ask an afflicted conscience, if Jesus, that is, a Saviour, be not a precious word that hath a sovereign value, both a refreshing smell and a healing

virtue. The hammer of the law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of Jesus that can soften it. And where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it; or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, Christ, well may it be called "an ointment poured out," for it signifies his "anointing." And that the sweet savour of this name may affect, read but that one passage, Isa. lxi. 1; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek," &c. What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of those effects to which Christ was anointed! And yet we find not a word among them all for a proud stiff-necked sinner. Here are "good tidings," but it is to "the meek;" comfortable "binding up," but it is for the "broken-hearted;" "liberty," but it is for "captives" and "prisoners" groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered, not for such as delight in their bondage; there is "oil of joy" and "garments of praise," but they are provided for "mourning," dejected spirits that need them; not for the impenitent. On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises, "The day of vengeance of our God;" and that is the portion of Christ's enemies, and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, that at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next may be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the disconsolate lamenting sinner lift up his head and behold Christ, the Son of God, anointed a Prophet, to preach salvation and liberty to such; a Priest to purchase it; and a King to give it.

Now the "pouring out" of this name is diverse. Before the coming of the Messiah, his name was poured out in prophecies and promises, in types and legal ceremonies; but more fully when the "Word was made flesh." Then

angels, and holy men, yea, and women, spake clearly of him. What was his Father's voice at his baptism, the Holy Ghost descending, what was his own preaching, and miracles, and conversation, but all the pouring forth of his precious name? And in his sufferings and death, what think you? Was not his name then poured forth, yea, his blood with it? Yes, truly. Being extended on the cross, and his body pierced in divers places, his precious ointments were shed abroad towards all the quarters of the world; their smell reached both heaven and the visible earth. God the Father, as he was said to do in Noah's sacrifice, did smell in his sacrifice a savour of rest, appeasing his wrath; and all believers a savour of peace, a quieting of their consciences. And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so in these his sufferings, did the obedience, patience, and love, and all the graces, and the name of our Saviour, most clearly manifest themselves to the world. After he was dead they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before, and yet more fully after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, which was poured from heaven on them for this very end, that they might pour forth Christ's name to the ends of the earth, Acts ii. 8. And they did so, carrying this precious "treasure in earthen vessels," as that elect vessel St. Paul speaks; and ever since God hath continued the pouring forth of this name by the ministry and preaching of the Gospel. It is true there are too many of those that are employed in this work who seek themselves and their own ends, rather than his glory whom they preach; and they that are more upright, the very best of them, are sinful men; but how mean and unworthy soever they be, despise

not the Gospel. Let the sweet name which they pour forth prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have salvation by it; and "there is no other name under heaven" by which that can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the Gospel preached, so in the sacraments annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day (it should have been) to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls? Nor shall any that came thus, be disappointed. And if not immediately, yet most certainly, and that in due time, they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of Christ is poured out, yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual: it is this—the secret and powerful working of the Spirit of God in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of Christ round about a man, but till the Spirit concur with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, who hears much of Christ, and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely. A man may have much common knowledge of Christ, and may understand well, yea, may preach well concerning his worth and graces, and yet not love him. But there is a particular knowledge of him by the infusion of the Spirit; and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is "a shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts," that the apostle speaks of, and this draws us after him; for our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us. So then, though many hear of Christ, yet because there are but few that have this special knowledge of him, therefore it is, that so few do truly esteem him and love him; and they are such as are here called virgins: and that is the third thing.

III. The correspondence in the character of those who

love Christ ; “The virgins.” Similitude and conformity of nature begets friendship. Pure affections delight in a pure object, and it makes them such. For the truth is, Christ doth not find men naturally suitable to himself, but as he took on him our nature, so he washeth away the sinfulness of our nature, which he took not on, and makes us that way conformable to his nature. And they who are so changed, though they were formerly lovers of sin, yet by conversion, which is called regeneration, they are born again, and so become, not only chaste, but even virgins spiritually ; for by virgins here, are not meant such as Romish votaries fancy them to be. No ; this virginity may well consist with any lawful state of life. These virgins are such as be truly holy and pure in heart and life, who, though they are not perfectly free from all sin, yet have affection to no sin. These are singularly delighted with the smell of Christ’s name and graces, while the voluptuous person and the profane worldling dislike and despise it. These virgins bestow their affection whole and entire upon Christ.

How grossly do you delude yourselves who make your hearts dens of pride, filthy lust, malice, and envy, and thousands of vanities, and yet think to find a corner in them to lodge Christ too ! Truly, you would both straiten him in room, and give him very bad neighbours. No ; they that think not a whole heart too little for him shall never enjoy him.

“The virgins love thee.” Grace destroys not the natural passions of the soul, but corrects them only, by destroying their corruption, and so they become not merely not contrary to grace, but are made the subject and seat of grace. This of love, which is the chief of them, we see, it abolisheth not, but rectifies it, recalling it to its due object, and turning it into the right channel, by which it may empty itself into the ocean of goodness.

And this love may well consist with the purity of virgins ; yea, it is this love that purifies and makes them such. “The

virgins love"—but whom? "Thee." And it is as reasonable a love as it is pure; "Therefore they love thee," because thou hast made them in some measure apprehensive of thy worth, which commands the love of all that know it; not a cold and indifferent affection, but a superlative ardent love, far overtopping all their other desires: and with good reason, since Christ doth infinitely and beyond all comparison surpass all other things desirable. Ask your own hearts if you love Christ thus; for if not thus, you love him not at all. The apostle St. Paul's love was of this size. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." This love will not only undergo difficulties and sufferings for Christ without either repining or fainting, but it will even be glad to meet with them, as opportunity is, to exercise and testify itself. Hard things will seem most easy for his sake, and bitter things exceedingly sweet. In a word, to him that loves, scarcely any thing is impossible. Love is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest conform themselves to it, desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and sorrow.

If then you love Christ, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest. If he withdraw himself, or appear angry, if either you see him not, or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it cannot be allayed by any worldly employments. Yet upon some former tokens of his love, which is known to be unchangeable, hope will uphold the soul; till the beams of his grace scatter the cloud, and break through. Though our Joseph seem strange and speak roughly for a while, he cannot long refrain discovering his affection.

Again: love you him? Unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you. As great will be your delight in possession, as your desire is in pursuit; and while you have

his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you indeed heard Christ speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul, and arm it against dangers and distracting distrustful fears! "Perfect love casteth out fear," saith St. John; that is, all base and servile fear; but there is one fear that is in no heart but where love begets it, fear to offend. You know how wary and loath men are naturally to displease those they love; therefore it is, that love to Christ and a careful observing of his commandments are inseparable companions. Yea, love itself is the "fulfilling of the law," for it gives up the heart to God, and consequently the whole man. Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of Christ calls for, (and what doth it not call for?) there is none, I say, but is comprised under this one of love. Do you owe him praises? Yes, surely—then love him; that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks; much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him? Doubtless: he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood. And truly there is no obedience or service so full and so cheerful as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to Christ, and labour to be like him? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of Christ. Then there is nothing assimilates so much as love. Men delight in their society whom they love, and by their society they do insensibly contract their customs, and become like them. These virgins who love Christ for his graces, they love to converse with him, and by conversing with him, they receive of his graces, and have a smell of his perfumes. Not only do they, by the smell of his garments or such imposed rites, obtain the blessing, but they likewise smell like him by the participation of sanctifying grace, of his wisdom and holiness, in a pure and

godly conversation, abstaining from the impure lusts and pollutions of the world ; so likewise of his meekness and humility. Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride, and much of Christ. Ever the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he likewise of his own unworthiness, and God's free mercy, and consequently, the more humility.

If you love Christ, you cannot choose but be like him in love to your brethren. This is expressly compared by the psalmist to the "precious ointment poured upon Aaron's head, that ran down to the very skirts of his garments." Our Head and High Priest, the Lord Jesus, hath incomparably testified his love to believers, whom he is pleased to call his brethren. They are far from equalling him, either in love to him or in love one to another, but they do imitate him in both. This is his great commandment, "that we love one another, even as he loved us," which is expressed both as a strong motive and a high example. It is not possible that a spirit of malice and implacable hatred can consist with the love of Christ.

Finally : should you be ready to suffer for Christ ? Yes. Then love is that which will enable you : and if you were inflamed with this fire, then, though burned for him, that fire would only consume your dross and be soon extinguished : but this would endure for ever.

By these and the like evidences, try whether you indeed love the Lord Jesus Christ : and by these fruits, you who profess to love him, testify the sincerity of your love : and be assured, that if you be now found amongst these virgins that love him, you will one day be of the number of those virgins that are spoken of, Rev. xiv. 3, 4, who sing a new song before the throne of God.

If you hate the defilements of the world, and be not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of Christ. . He shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing. When you

come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consolation, such as you would not exchange for crowns and sceptres. And after some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment; where you shall be never weary, but for ever happy in beholding the face of the blessed Trinity: to whom be glory. Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH.

ROMANS viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

OTHER men may fancy and boast as they please, but there are none in the world but the godly only, that are furnished with sufficiently strong supports and comforts against all possible hazards. And of these doth the apostle treat most freely, sweetly, and plentifully in this chapter. He secures believers in their Christ, touching these two great evils, after-condemnation and present affliction, that the one cannot befall them, and the other cannot hurt them.

For their immunity from the former, they have the clear word of the Gospel, and the seal of the Spirit; and that former privilege made sure, as the far greater doth secure the other as the less.

They are freed from condemnation, and not only so, but entitled and ensured to a kingdom. And what hurt then can affliction do them? Yea, it doth good; not only it cannot rob them of their crown, but it carries them on towards it, is their highway to it: "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." Yea, all things to the chil-

dren of God do prove advantageous: severally taken, in their present sense they may seem evil, but taken jointly in their after issue, their working together is all for good. In their simple nature, possibly they are poison, yet tempered and prepared, they will prove medicinal. "All these things are against me," said old Jacob, and yet he lived to see that even all these were for him. The children of God are indeed so happy, that the harshest things in their way change their nature, and become sweet and profitable. Thus much is effected by their prayers, which have a divine incantation in them. They breathe forth the expressions of their love to God, by which they are characterized, "them that love God;" and "that" is put on their hearts, the impression of his love to them, to which they are here led by the apostle as to the spring head of all. All their comforts and privileges flow thence, yea, all their love and their faith, appropriating those comforts and privileges. Yea, the very treasury of all together, Jesus Christ himself, is the free gift of this free love. He, as the greatest, ascertains all things besides as unspeakably less.

These two are such mighty arguments, that no difficulty nor grief can stand before them. The "love of God"—he is with us, who then can be against us? All the world, it may be, but that all is nothing. Once it was nothing. It was that God who is our God who loves us and is for us, who made it something; and if he will, it may again be nothing. And as it is at its best, it is nothing, being compared with another gift which he hath bestowed on us; and having bestowed that, surely if there be any thing in this world can do us any good, we shall not want it. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

And to close all, he makes these two great immunities good to us in Christ. He fixes there. There we are freed from all fear of condemnation, or of being hurt by affliction.

No accusation nor guiltiness can annul the righteousness of Christ, and that is made ours. No distress nor suffering can cut us off from the love of God; and if it cannot do that, we need not fear it. All other hazards are no hazard, that being sure.

And in confidence of this, the apostle gives the defiance, casts a challenge to angels, to men, and to the world, upon these two points, Who shall accuse? Who shall separate? Accuse to God, or separate from him? Whatsoever times may come, the hardest that any can apprehend or foretell, if these two be not sufficient furniture against them, I know not what is.

Men are commonly busied about other events, concerning them and theirs, what shall become of this or the other, and what if this or that fall out; but the conscience once raised to this inquiry, the soul being awake to discern the hazard of eternal death, all other fears and questions are drowned and lost in this great question, Am I condemned or not? Is my sin pardoned, or not?

And then a satisfying answer received concerning this, all is quiet; the soul reposes sweetly on God, and puts all its other concernments into his hands. Let him make me poor and despised, let him smite and chastise me, he hath forgiven my sin, all is well. That burden taken off, the soul can go light, yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. O how it feels itself nimble, as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under. O blessed the man whose sin is taken off, "lifted from his shoulders," that is the word, Psa. xxxii. 1; laid over upon Christ, who could bear the whole load, and take it away, take it out of sight, which we could never have done; no, it would have sunk us for ever. "He hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows;" lifted them away. O how a sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of obedience and love to him as our Redeemer, and which is all he lays on us! If we follow him and bear his cross, he is our strength, and

bears both it and us. So then this is the great point, the heart's ease, to be delivered from the condemning weight of sin.

And certainly, while men do not think thus, their hearts have very slight impressions of the truth of these things. I fear, the most of us scarcely believe this condemnation to come, at least very shallowly, and so they cannot much consider the deliverance from it provided for us in Jesus Christ. I cannot see how it is possible for a heart persuaded of these things, to be very careful about any thing beside. You who eat and drink, and labour and trade, and bestow all your time either in the pains or the pleasures of this earth, what think you of eternity? Is it a light thing for you to perish for ever? After a few days vainly spent, to fall under the wrath of God for ever? O, that you would be persuaded to think on these things!

And you who have an interest in this free and blessed estate, why are your spirits so cold, so infrequent in the thoughts of it? Why are you not rejoicing in the Lord, gladdening yourselves in secret when you remember this! Go the world as it will, my sin is forgiven me. Mistake me, accuse me whoso will, my God hath acquitted me in his Christ, and he loves me, and lives to intercede for me.

Methinks I hear some say, "Ay, they who could say that might be merry indeed; but, alas! I have no such assurance. 'Who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' That is true; but here is the great point of so hard a resolution, Am I one of these?"

That the apostle doth thus specify the owners of this consolation by this high and hidden character of this election, is not to render it doubtful and dark: for his main aim, on the contrary, is, both to extend it as far as it can go, and to make it as clear as may be to all that have interest in it: but he designates them by the primitive act of love fixing on them, so as it is now manifested to them in the subsequent effects which flow from their election—

called, and sanctified, and conformed to Jesus Christ, both by his Spirit within them, and by the sufferings that without arise against them in the world. They are such as, being "the sons of God," are "led by the Spirit of God," and "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And these things indeed, considered as their characters, the stamp of God on them, the impressions of their election to life, do check the vain confidence of all carnal ungodly professors of the name of Christ, and tell them that their pretended title to him is a mere delusion. Certainly whosoever lives in the love of sin and takes the flesh for his guide, that accursed blind guide is leading him into the pit. What gross folly and impudence is it for any man, walking in the lusts of his own heart, to fancy and aver himself to be a partner of that redemption, whercof so great a part is, to deliver us from the power of our iniquities, to renew our hearts, and reunite them to God, and possess them with his love!

The great evidence of thy election is love. Thy love to him gives certain testimony of his preceding eternal love to thee: so are they here designated, "them that love God." Thy choosing him is the effect and evidence of his choosing thee. Now, this is not laborious nor needs to be disputed. Amidst all thy frailties, feel the pulse of thine affection, which way it beats, and ask thy heart whether thou love him or not. In this, thou hast the character of thy election.

Know you not, that the redeemed of Christ and he are one? They live one life. Christ lives in them, and "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," as the apostle declares in this chapter. So then this we are plainly to tell you, and consider it—you that will not let go your sins and lay hold on Christ, have as yet no share in him.

But on the other side, the truth is, that when souls are once set upon this search, they commonly wind the notion too high, and subtilize too much in the dispute, and so entangle and perplex themselves, and drive themselves

further off from that comfort that they are seeking after. Such measures and marks of grace they set to themselves for their rule and standard; and unless they find these without all controversy in themselves, they will not believe that they have an interest in Christ, and this blessed and safe estate in him.

To such I would only say, Are you in a willing league with any known sin? Yea, would you willingly, if you might be saved in that way, give up yourself to voluptuousness and ungodliness, and not at all desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way of holiness? Then truly I have not any thing as yet to say for your comfort; only, there is a salvation provided, and the door is yet open, and your heart may be changed. But, on the other side, are the desires of thy soul after Christ, a whole Christ, to be righteousness, and withal sanctification to thee? Wouldst thou willingly give up thyself to be ruled by him, and have him for thy king? Hadst thou rather choose to suffer the greatest affliction for his sake, to honour him, than to commit the least sin to displease him? Doth thy heart go out after him, when thou hearest him spoken of? Dost thou account him thy treasure, so that all the world sounds but as an empty shell to thee when he is named? Says thy soul within thee, O that he were mine? and, O that I were his, that I could please him and live to him? Then do not toss thy spirit, and jangle and spin out thy thoughts in fruitless endless doubtings, but close with this as thy portion, and be of good comfort, thy sins are or will be forgiven thee.

I add further: if thou sayest still, that thou findest none of all this, yet, I say, there is warrant for thee to believe and lay hold on this righteousness here held forth to the end that thou mayest then find those things in thee, and find comfort in them. Thou art convinced of ungodliness; then believe on him who justifies the ungodly. Thou art condemned; yet Christ is dead and risen. Flee to him as such, as the "Lamb slain, he who was dead and is alive;"

and then say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen." Who shall accuse? It is true they may clamour and make a noise, both Satan and thy conscience, but how can they fasten any accusation on thee? If they dare accuse, yet they cannot condemn, when the Judge hath acquitted thee, and declared thee free, who is greater than all, and hath the absolute power of the sentence. All charges and libels come too late, after he hath once pronounced a soul righteous. And who shall condemn? "It is Christ that died." If the sentence of the law be brought forth, yet here is the answer; it ought not to be twice satisfied; now once it is satisfied in Christ; he hath died, and that stands for the believer. Whosoever flees to him, and lays hold on him for life, he cannot die again, nor canst thou die, for whom he died once.

"Or rather is risen again;" that raises the assurance higher, and sets it firmer, for this evidences that in his death all was paid. When he, being the surety, and seized on for the debt, and once death's prisoner, yet was set free, this clears the matter that there is no more to be paid. And yet further as a sign that all is done, he is raised to the height of honour above all principalities and powers, is set at the right hand of the Father, and there he sits and lives to "make intercession," to sue out the fulfilling of all for believers, the bringing of them home; lives to see all made good that he died and covenanted for. So now that his righteousness is thine who believest, any challenge must meet with Christ first; and if it seize not on him, it cannot light on thee, for thou art in him, married to him. And the same triumph that he speaks, Isa. l. 8, whence these words are borrowed, is made thine, and thou mayest now speak it in him. I know not what can cast him down, who hath this word to rest upon, and to comfort himself in.

SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH.

ROMANS viii. 35, &c.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? &c.

Is this he who so lately cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” who now triumphs? O happy man! “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Yes, it is the same. Pained then with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, Who will deliver? who will separate me from that? now, now, he hath found a deliverer, to do that for him, to whom he is for ever united, and he glories now in his inseparable union and unalterable love, which none can divide him from. Yea, it is through him, that presently after that word of complaint he praises God; and now, in him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there betwixt a Christian taken in himself, and in Christ! When he views himself in himself, then he is nothing but a poor, miserable, polluted, perishing wretch; but then he looks again, and sees himself in Christ, and there he is rich, and safe, and happy; he triumphs and he glories in it above all the painted prosperities, and against all the horrid adversities of the world; he lives in his Christ, content and happy, and laughs at all his enemies.

And he extends his triumph; he makes a common good

of it to all believers, speaks it in their name, "Who shall separate us?" and would have them partake of the same confidence, and speak in the same style with him. It is vain that men fancy these to be expressions of revelations, or some singularly privileged assurances: then they would not suit their end, which is clearly and undoubtedly the encouragement of all the children of God, upon grounds that are peculiar to them from all the rest of the world, but common to them all, in all ages and all varieties of condition.

It is true, all of them have not alike clear and firm apprehensions of their happy and sure estate, and scarcely any of them are alike at all times; yet they have all and always the same right to this estate and to the comfort of it, and when they stand in a right light to view it, they do see it so, and rejoice in it.

There be indeed some kinds of assurance that are more rare and extraordinary, some immediate glances or coruscations of the love of God upon the soul of a believer, a smile of his countenance; and this doth exceedingly refresh, yea, ravish the soul, and enables it mightily for duties and sufferings. These he dispenses arbitrarily and freely, where and when he will. Some weaker Christians sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them, the Lord training them to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

And that is the other, the less ecstatical, but the more constant and fixed kind of assurance, the proper assurance of faith: the soul, by believing, cleaves unto God in Christ as he offers himself in the gospel, and thence is possessed with a sweet and calm persuasion of his love; that being the proper work, to appropriate him, to make Christ and in him eternal life ours. So that it is the proper result and fruit of that its acting, especially when it acts any thing strongly, to quiet the soul in him. Then "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and from that peace, joy, yea, even "glorying in

tribulation" follows ; and these springing, not from any extraordinary sense or view, but from the very innate virtue of faith working kindly, and according to its own nature.

Therefore many Christians do prejudice their own comfort and darken their spirits, by not giving freedom to faith to act according to its nature and proper principles. They will not believe till they find some evidence or assurance, which is quite to invert the order of the thing, and to look for fruit without setting a root for it to grow from.

Would you take Christ upon the absolute word of promise tendering him to you, and rest on him so, this would ingraft you into life itself, for that he is ; and so those fruits of the Holy Ghost would bud and flourish in your hearts. From that very believing on him, would arise this persuasion, yea, even to a glorying and an humble boasting in his love ; " Who shall accuse ? Who shall condemn ? Who shall separate ? "

The undivided companion and undoubted helper and preserver of this confidence of faith is an active love to Christ, leading to a constant study of holiness and strife against sin, which is the grand enemy of faith, which obstructs the very vital spirits of faith, which makes it sickly and heavy in its actings, and causes the palsy in the hand of faith, so that it cannot lay so fast hold. Therefore this you should be careful of ; yea, know that of necessity it attends faith, and as faith grows, holiness will grow, and holiness growing will mutually strengthen and establish faith. The comforts of the Holy Ghost are holy, purifying comforts, and the more the soul is purified and made holy, the more it is cleared and enlarged to receive much of these comforts. " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Unholiness is as damps and filthy mists in the soul ; it darkens all.

Hence it is evident in what way Christians may and ought to aspire to this assurance. It is their portion, and

in this way they are to aspire to it, and shall find it ; if not immediately, yet let them wait and go on in this way, they shall not miscarry.

Again ; it appears that this assurance is no enemy to holy diligence, nor a friend of carnal security. On the contrary, it is the only thing that doth eminently ennoble and embolden the soul for all adventures and services. Base fears and doubtings, wherein some place much of religion, and many weak Christians seem to think it a kind of holy spiritual temper to be thus questioning and doubting—these base fears can never produce any thing truly generous, no height of obedience ; they do nothing but entangle and disable the soul for every good work. “ Perfect love casteth out this fear,” and works a sweet unperplexing fear, a holy wariness not to offend, which fears nothing else. And this confidence of love is the great secret of comfort, and of ability to do God service. Nothing makes so strong and healthful a constitution of soul, as pure love. It dares submit itself to God, and resign itself to him. It dares venture itself into his hand, and trust his word, and seeks no more than how to please him. A heart thus composed, goes readily and cheerfully into all services, to do, to suffer, to live, to die, at his pleasure ; and firmly stands to this, that “ nothing can separate ” it from that which is sufficient for it, which is all its happiness, “ the love of God in Christ Jesus.” That is indeed his love to us, but it is so as it includes inseparably the inseparableness of our love to him. For observe the things specified as most likely, if any thing, to separate us : “ Shall tribulation or distress,” &c. Now these especially, being endured for his sakes cannot immediately have any likely visage of altering his love to us, but rather confirm us in it ; but these shall not separate us by altering our love to him, by driving us from him, and carrying us into any way of defection or denial of his name, and so cut us off from our union with him, and interest in his love ; and that is the way wherein the weak

Christian will most apprehend the hazard of separation. Now the apostle speaks his own sense, and would raise in his brethren the same confidence, as to that danger. There is no fear; not one of these things shall be able to carry us away. These mighty waves shall not unsettle our faith, nor quench the flame of our love. We shall be victors, and more than victors, in all. But how? "Through him that hath loved us." Thus his love makes sure ours. He hath such hold of our hearts as he will not let go, nor suffer us to let go our hold: all is fast by his strength. He will not lose us, nor shall any be able to pluck us out of his hand.

Jesus Christ is the medium of this love, the middle link that keeps all safe together betwixt God and man, being so closely united in his personal nature, and the persons of men in and by him, to the Father. So here, it is first called the "love of Christ," ver. 35, and then, in the close, "the love of God in Christ;" the soul being first carried to him as nearest, but so carried by him into that primitive love of God that flows in Christ, and that gave even Christ to us as before. And this is the bottom-truth, the firm ground of the saints' perseverance, which men, not taking aright, must needs question the matter. Yea, we may put it out of question upon their suppositions; for if our own purposes and strength were all we had to rely on, alas, how soon were we shaken!

So "the love of God in Christ" is not only here mentioned as the point of happiness, from which we cannot be removed, but as the principle of firmness that makes itself sure of us, and us of it, and will not part with us.

Now it is no pride in a Christian, but the truest humility, to triumph and glory in this. This is it that makes all sure; this is the great comfort and the victory of the saints. He that loved us and bought us so dear, will not lightly slip from us; yea, upon no terms will he let us go, unless some stronger than he is meet with him, and by force bereave him

of us ; which we know is impossible. He and his Father, who are one in themselves and in their strength, and one in this love, are greater and stronger than all ; and he that once overcame for us, always overcomes in us.

Thus he lets temptations and tribulations assault us, and this neither disproves his love, nor endangers his right to us ; yea, it doth but give proof and evidence of the invincible firmness of both. He suffers others to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure ; but he hath nobler business for his champions, his worthies, and most of all for the stoutest of them. He calls them forth to honourable services, to the hardest encounters ; he sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches and persecutions, with prisons and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he them less, or they him ? O no ! He looks on, and rejoices to see them do valiantly ; it is the joy of his heart, no sight on earth so sweet to him ; and it is all the while by his subduing and in his strength, that they hold out in the conflict, and obtain the conquest.

And thus they are the more endeared to him by these services and these adventures of love for him, and he still likewise is the more endeared to them. Certainly, the more any one suffers for Christ, the more he loves Christ ; as love doth grow and engage itself by all it does and suffers, and burns hotter by what it encounters and overcomes, as by fuel added to it. As to Jesus Christ, by what he suffered for us we are the dearer to him, so is he to us by all we suffer for his sake.

Love grows most by opposition from others, when it is sure of acceptance and the correspondence of mutual love in the party loved. Above all, this heavenly, divine love is “ strong as death,” a vehement flame, “ a flame of God,” indeed, as the word is, Cant. viii. 6 ; and “ many waters cannot quench it ;” not all these that here follow one another, “ tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness,

peril, sword." Yea, in the midst of these it grows. The soul cleaves more closely to Christ, the more attempts are made to remove it from him, though "killed all the day long." This passage from the psalms is most fit, both to testify that persecution is not unusually the lot of the saints, and to give instance of their firm adherence to God in all troubles, as the church there professeth. And if the saints in that dispensation could reckon in such a manner, much more ought Christians, upon a clearer discovery of the covenant of grace, and their union with God in Christ. The saints are as in a common butchery in the world; yea, not only "as sheep for the slaughter," but sometimes as sheep for the altar, men thinking it a sacrifice. "They that kill you," says our Saviour, "shall think they do God service." Yet even this pulls not from him. They part with life; ay, why not? This life is but a death, and he is our life for whom we lose it.

All these things do but increase the victories and triumphs of love, and make it more glorious. They are not only conquerors, but "more than conquerors," by multiplied victories, and they gain in them all both more honour and more strength; they are the fitter for new adventures, and so more than simple conquerors. We overcome, and are sure not to lose former conquests, but to add more and conquer on to the end: which other conquerors are not sure of. Oftentimes they outlive their own successes and renown, and lose on a sudden what they have been gaining a whole lifetime. Not so here: we are secured in the Author of our victories. It is "through him that hath loved us;" and he cannot grow less, yea, he shall still grow greater, till all his enemies be made his footstool.

Having given the challenge, and finding none to answer, and that all the most apparent are in a most rhetorical accumulation silenced, "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword;" he goes on confidently in the triumph, and avers his assurance of full and final victory

against all imaginable power of all the creatures ; “ Neither death nor life,” nor the fear of the most terrible death, nor the hope or love of the most desirable life. And in the height of this courage and confidence, he supposes impossible enemies, “ Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers ;” unless you take it of the angels of darkness only ; but if it could be possible that the others should offer at such a thing, they would be too weak for it. No sense of any “ present things,” nor apprehension of “ things to come ;” not any thing within the vast circle of the world above or below ; “ nor any creature” can do it. Here sin is not specified, because he is speaking of outward oppositions and difficulties expressly, and because that is removed by the former challenge, “ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ?” that asserting a free and final acquittance of all sin, a pardon of the curse, which yet will never encourage any of those to sin who live in the assurance of this love. O no ! And these general words do include it too, “ Nor things present, nor things to come ;” thus it is carried clear, and is the satisfying comfort of all whom Jesus Christ hath drawn after him, and united in his love.

It is enough ; whatsoever they may be separated from, the things or persons dearest in this world, it is no matter ; the jewel is safe. None can take my Christ from me, and I am safe in him, as his purchase. None can take me from him ; and being still in his love, and through him in the Father’s love, that is sufficient. What can I fear ? What can I want ? All other hazards signify nothing. How little value are they of ! And for how little a while am I in danger of them ! Methinks, all should look on a believer with an emulous eye, and wish his estate more than a king’s.

Alas, poor creatures ! rich men, great men, princes and kings, what vain things are they that you embrace and cleave to ! Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of them, “ Who shall separate us ?” Storms may arise and scatter ships that sail smoothly together in

fair weather. Thou mayest be removed, by public commotions and calamities, from thy sweet dwellings, and societies, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you must part, for you must die. Then farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honours, and even crowns themselves. Then dearest friends, children and wife, must be parted with. And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldst gladly part with and canst not, the condemning guilt of all thy sins?

But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, feels little or nothing; he cleaves to Christ. and these separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist, death, comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus, that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him, and the fullest enjoyment of him for ever.

SERMON IX.

THE PROMISES AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO HOLINESS.

2 CORINTHIANS vii. 1.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

It is a thing both of unspeakable sweetness and usefulness for a Christian often to consider the excellency of that estate to which he is called. It cannot fail to put him upon very high resolutions; and carry him on in the divine ambition of behaving daily more suitable to his high calling and hopes. Therefore, these are often set before Christians in the Scriptures, and are pressed here by the apostle upon a particular occasion, the avoidance of near combinements with unbelievers. He mentions some choice promises which God makes to his own people, and speaks of their near relation to, and communion with, himself; and upon these he enlarges, and raises the exhortation to the universal endeavour of all holiness, and that as aiming at the very top and highest degree of it.

In the words are, I. the thing to which he would persuade; II. the motive.

I. The thing is "holiness" in its full extension and intention; "Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The purging out of filthiness, and the perfecting of ho-

liness, express those two parts of renewing grace, mortification and vivification, as usually they are distinguished. But I conceive they are not so truly different parts, as a different notion, of the same thing, the decrease of sin and the increase of grace being truly one thing, as are the dispelling of darkness and the augmenting of light. So here, the one is rendered as the necessary result, yea, as the equivalent of the other, as the same thing indeed; "cleansing from filthiness," and, in so doing, "perfecting holiness;" "perfecting holiness," and, in so doing, "cleansing from filthiness." By "perfection" is meant a growing, progressive advance towards perfection.

The words, without straining, give us as it were the several dimensions of holiness. The breadth, "cleansing from all filthiness;" the length, parallel to man's composition, running all along through his soul and body—"from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" the height, "perfecting holiness;" the depth, that which is the bottom whence it rises up—a deep impress of the fear of God, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

"Let us cleanse ourselves." It is the Lord who is the sanctifier of his people. "He purges away their dross and sin." He "pours clean water," according to his promises; yet doth he call us to cleanse ourselves. Even, "having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves." He puts a new life into us, and causes us to act, and excites us to excite it and call it up into act in the progress of sanctification. Men are strangely inclined to a perverse construction of things. Tell them that we are to act and work, and to "give all diligence," then they would fancy a doing in their own strength, and be their own saviours. Again, tell them that God works all our works in us and for us, then they would take the ease of doing nothing. If they cannot have the praise of doing all, they will sit still with folded hands, and use no diligence at all. But this is the corrupt logic of the flesh, its base sophistry. The apostle reasons just contrary;

“It is God that worketh in us, both to will and do;”—therefore, would a carnal heart say, we need not work, or, at least, may work very carelessly; but he infers, “Therefore let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” that is, in the more humble obedience to God and dependence on him, not obstructing the influence of his grace, and by sloth and negligence provoking him to withdraw or abate it. Certainly, many in whom there is truth of grace, are kept low in the growth of it, by their own slothfulness, sitting still, and not bestirring themselves, and exercising the proper actions of that spiritual life by which it is entertained and advanced.

“From all filthiness;” all kinds of sinful pollutions. Not as men commonly do, reform some things, and take to themselves dispensations in others, at least in some one peculiar sin, their mistress, their Herodias, or their Delilah: no parting with that; yea, they rather forego many other things, as a kind of composition for the retaining of it.

“Of flesh and spirit.” The whole man must be purified and consecrated to God; not only refined from the gross outward acts of sin, but from the inward affection to it, and from the secret motions of it, so that the heart, “like a weaned child,” go not after it, which, when restrained from the outward commission of sin, it may do, and very often does, as the Israelites “lusted after the flesh pots;” their hearts remained in Egypt still, though their bodies were brought out. This, then, is to be done; affection to sin is to be purged out; that is, we are to cleanse the ground; not only to lop off the branches, but to dig about, and loosen and pluck up the root. Though still fibres of it will stick, yet we ought still to be finding them out, and plucking them up.

Further; this applies not only to the inner part of all sins, but to some sins that are almost or wholly inward, that hang not so much on the body, nor are acted by it; those “filthinesses of the spirit,” which are less easily discerned

than those of the flesh, and, as more hardly discerned, so when discerned, more hardly purged out; pride, self-love, unbelief, curiosity, &c., which, though more retired and refined sins, yet are pollutions and defilements, yea, of the worst sort, as being more spiritual "filthinesses of the spirit." Fleshly pollutions are things of which the devils are not capable in themselves, though they excite men to them, and so they are called unclean spirits. But the highest rank of sins are those that are properly "spiritual wickednesses." These in men are the chief strengths of Satan, the inner works of his forts and "strong holds;" 2 Cor. x. 4. Many who are not much tempted to the common gross sensualities, who have possibly though an inclination to them, yet a kind of disdain of them, and through education, morality, and strength of reason, with somewhat of natural conscience, are carried above them, yet they have many of those "heights" the apostle speaks of, those lofty "imaginings" that rise against God and the "obedience of Christ," all which must be demolished.

"Perfecting holiness." Not content with low measures, with just so much as keeps from hell, but aspiring towards perfection; aiming high at self-victory, self-denial, and the love of God becoming purer and hotter, like a fire, growing and flaming up, and consuming the earth. Though men fall short of their aim, yet it is good to aim high; they will shoot so much the higher, though not full so high as they aim. Thus we ought to be setting the state of perfection in our eye, resolving not to rest content below that, and to come as near it as we can, even before we come at it. "Not as though I had already attained," says the apostle, "but this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark." This is to act as one who hath such a hope, such a state in view, and is still advancing towards it.

"In the fear of God." There is no working but on firm

ground ; there are no solid endeavours in holiness where it is not founded in a deeply felt reverence of God, a desire to please him and to be like him, which springs from love. This most men are either wholly strangers to, or are but slight and shallow in it, and therefore make so little true progress in holiness.

II. Then there is the motive ; “ Having these promises.” Being called to so fair an estate, so excellent a condition, to be the people, yea, the sons and daughters of God, therefore they are called to the coming forth from Babel, and the separating themselves from sin, and purging it out. Holiness is his image in his children : the more there is of it, the more suitable are they to that blessed relation and dignity, and the firmer are their hopes of the inheritance of glory.

Consider sin as a filthiness ; hate it. O how ugly and vile is lust, how deformed is swelling pride ! And all sin is an aversion from God, a casting of the noble soul into the mire, the defacing of all its beauty. Turning to present things, it pollutes itself with them. He who is “ clad in scarlet, embraces the dunghill,” as Jeremiah in another sense laments.

The purity of things is an unmixture and simplicity corresponding with their own being ; and such is the purity of the soul when elevated above the earth and sense, and united to God, contemplating him, and delighting in him. All inordinate bent to the creatures, or to itself, which is the first and main disorder, doth defile and debase it. And the more it is sublimed and free from itself, the purer and more heavenly it grows, and partakes the more of God, and resembles him the more.

This, then, is to be our main study ; first to search out our iniquities, the particular defilements of our nature ; not only gross filthiness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, but our love of this earth or of air, our vanity of mind, our self-will and self-seeking. Most persons, even most Christians,

are short-sighted in respect to their own secret evils, the "filthinesses of the spirit" especially, and use little diligence in this inquiry. They do not seek light from God, to go in before him, and to lead them into themselves, as the prophet had in the discovery of idolatries at Jerusalem. O that we could once see what heaps of abominations lie hid in us, one behind another!

Then, having searched out, we must follow on to purge out. We are not to pass over nor to spare any, but to delight most in casting out the best beloved sin, the choicest idol, that hath had most of our service and sacrifices, to make room for Jesus Christ.

And never cease in this work, for still there is need of more purifying. One day's work in this disposes for and engages to a further work in the next; for as sin is purged out, light comes in, and more clear discoveries are made of remaining pollutions. So then still there must be progress, less of the world and more of God in the heart every day. O this is a sweet course of life! What gain, what preferment, is to be compared to it?

And in this, it is good to have our ambition growing; the higher we rise, to aspire still the higher, looking further than before, even toward the perfection of holiness. It is not much we can here attain to, but surely it is commonly far less than we might; we improve not our condition and advantages as we might do. The world are busy driving forwards their designs. Men of spirit are animated both by better and by worse success. If any thing miscarry, it sets them on the more eagerly to make it up, in the right management of some other design: and when they prosper in one thing, that enables and encourages them to attempt further. Shall all other things seem worth our pains? Are only grace and glory so cheap in our account, that the least diligence of all goes that way? O strange delusion!

Now our cleansing is to be managed by all holy means

—the word and sacraments more wisely and spiritually used than commonly they are with us—and private prayer, which purifies and elevates the soul, takes it up into the mount, and makes it shine—and particularly supplicating for the Spirit of holiness and for victory over sin is not in vain; the soul obtains its desires of God, becoming that which it is fixedly set upon—holy resolution; Christians are much wanting in this, are faint and loose in their purposes—the consideration of divine truths, the mysteries of the kingdom, the hope of Christians, yea, rich and great promises—all these are means, and holy means they are, as their end is the perfection of holiness.

“ Having these promises.” Now consider whether it is better to be the slaves of Satan or the sons of God. Measure delight in God with the low base pleasures of sense. “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God :” these gradually go on together, and are perfected together.

Why then is there such an invincible love of sin in the hearts of men? At least why so little love of holiness and endeavour after it, such mean thoughts of it as a thing either indecent or unpleasant, when it is the only noble and the only delightful thing in the world? The soul by other things is drawn below itself, but by holiness it is raised above itself, and made divine. The pleasures of sin are for a season: they are the pleasures of a moment exchanged for those of eternity. But even in the mean time, in this season, the holy soul is fed with communion with God, one hour of which is more worth than the longest life of the highest of the world’s delights.

SERMON X.

DIVINE GRACE AND HOLY OBEDIENCE.

PSALM cxix. 32.

*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt
enlarge my heart.*

To desire ease and happiness, under a general representation of it, is a thing of easy and general persuasion ; there is somewhat in nature to help the argument. But to find beauty in, and be taken with, the very way of holiness that leads to it, is more rare, and depends on a higher principle. Self-love inclines a man to desire the rest of love, but to love and desire the labour of love is love of a higher and purer strain. To delight and be cheerful in obedience argues much love as the spring of it, that is the thing the holy psalmist doth so plentifully express in this psalm, and he is still desiring more of that sweet and lively affection, which would make him yet more abundant in action. Thus here, “ I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.” He presents his desires and his purpose together—The more of this grace thou bestowest on me, the more service shall I be able to do thee.

This is the top of his ambition—while others are seeking to enlarge their barns, their lands or estates, or their titles ; and kings, to enlarge their territories or authority, to encroach on neighbouring kingdoms, or be more absolute in their own ; instead of all such enlargements, this is

David's great desire, an enlarged heart to run the way of God's commandments.

And these other, how big soever they sound, are poor narrow desires. This one is larger and higher than them all, and gives evidence of a heart already large. But as it is miserable in those desires, so it is happy in this, that much would still have more.

Let others seek more money, or more honour; O the blessed choice of that soul, which is still seeking more love to God, more affection, and more ability to do him service; which counts all days and hours lost that are not employed to this improvement; which hears the word in public, and reads it in private for this purpose, to kindle this love, or to blow the spark, if any there be already in the heart, to raise it to a clear flame, and from a little flame to make it burn yet hotter and purer, and rise higher: but, above all means, is often presenting this in prayer to him on whose influence all depends, in whose hand our hearts are, much more than in our own. It follows him with this desire, and works on him by his own interest. Though there can be really no accession of gain to him by our services, yet he is pleased so to account with us as if there were. Therefore we may urge this—Lord, give more, and receive more: “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

We have here, in the words, a required disposition and a suitable resolution. The disposition relates to the resolution, as the means of fulfilling it; and the resolution relates to the disposition, both as the end of desiring it, and as the motive of obtaining it. The resolution occurs first in the words,

“I will run the way of thy commandments.” The way resolved on is, that of God's commandments; not the road of the polluted world, not the crooked ways of his own heart, but the highway, the royal way, the straight way of the kingdom, and that in the notion of subjection and

obedience, "the way of thy commandments." This man naturally struggles against, and repines at. To be limited and bounded by a law is a restraint; and vain man could possibly find in his heart to do many of the same things that are commanded, but he would not be tied, would have his liberty, and do it of his own choice. This is the "enmity of the carnal mind" against God, as the apostle expresses it: "it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be;" it breaks these bonds, and casts away the cords of his authority. This is sin, the transgression of the law; and this made the first sin so great, though in a matter one would think small, the eating of the fruit of a tree; it was rebellion against the majesty of God, casting off his law and authority, and aspiring to an imagined self-deity. And this is still the treasonable pride, or independency, and wickedness of our nature, rising up against God who formed us of nothing.

And this is the power and substance of religion, the new impress of God upon the heart, obedience and resignation to him. To be given up to him as entirely his, to be moulded and ordered as he wills, to be subject to his laws and appointments in all things, to have every action, and every word, under a rule and law, and the penalty to be so high, eternal death—all this, to a carnal or haughty mind, is hard. Not only every action and every word, but even every thought too, must be subject; the soul is not so much as thought-free. "Every thought is brought into captivity," as the apostle speaks; and so the licentious mind accounts it. Not only the affections and desires, but the very reasonings and imaginations are brought under this law.

Now to yield this as reasonable and due to God; to own his sovereignty, and to acknowledge the law to be "holy, just, and good;" to approve, yea, to love it, even where it most contradicts and controls our own corrupt will and the law of sin in our flesh—this is true spiritual obedience—to

study and inquire after the will of God in all our ways, what will please him, and, having found it, to follow that which is here called the "way of his commandments;" to make this our way, and our business in the world, and all other things but accessaries and by-works, even those lawful things that may be taken in and used as helps in our way: as the disciples, passing through the corn, plucked the ears, and did eat in passing, as a by-work, but their business was to follow their Master. And whatsoever would hinder us in this way must be watched and guarded against. To effect this, we must either remove and thrust it aside, or, if we cannot do that, yet we must go over it, and trample it under foot, were it the thing or the person that is dearest to us in the world. Till the heart be brought to this state and purpose, it is either wholly void of, or very low and weak in the truth of, religion.

We place religion much in our accustomed performances, in coming to church, hearing and repeating of sermons, and praying at home, keeping a road of such and such duties. The "way of God's commandments" is more in doing than in discourse. In many, religion evaporates itself too much out by the tongue, while it appears too little in their ways. O but this is the main! One act of charity, meekness, or humility, speaks more than a day's discourse. All the means we use in religion are intended for a further end, which if they attain not, they are nothing. This end is to mortify and purify the heart, to mould it in the way of God's commandments in the whole track of our lives; in our private converse one with another, and our retired secret converse with ourselves, to have God still before us, and his law our rule in all we do, that he may be our meditation day and night, and that his law may be our "counsellor," as this psalm hath it; to regulate all our designs and the works of our callings by it; to walk "soberly, and godly, and righteously in this present world;" to curb and cross our own wills where they cross God's; to deny

ourselves our own humour and pride, our passions and pleasures, to have all these subdued and brought under by the power of the law of love within us—this, and nothing below this, is the end of religion. Alas! amongst multitudes who are called Christians, some there may be who speak and appear like it, yet how few are there who make this their business, and aspire to this, “the way of God’s commandments!”

His intended course in this way, the psalmist expresses by “running.” It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions. Love will creep, where it cannot go. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion. If thou do but creep, be doing; creep on, yet desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet halting and lamely, desire to be strengthened to walk straight; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to run. So here; David did walk in this way, but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace; he would willingly run, and for that end he desires an “enlarged heart.”

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or not, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every pace whether they advance or not, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves and spend the time of doing and going, in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians. But it were a more wise and comfortable way, to be endeavouring onwards, and, if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run; not to be satisfied with any thing attained, but yet, by that unsatisfiedness, not to be so dejected as to sit down, or stand still, but rather excited to go on. So it was with St. Paul; “Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward.” If any one thinks that he hath done well and run far, and will take a pause, the great apostle is of another mind;

“Not as if I had already attained.” O no ! far from that, he still sets forward, as if nothing were done : like a runner, not still looking back to see how much he hath run, but forward to what he is to run, “stretching forth” to that, inflamed with frequent looks at the mark and end. Some are retarded by looking on what is past, as not satisfied : they have done nothing, as they think, and so stand still discontented. But even in that way, it is not good to look too much to things behind : we must forget them rather, and press onwards.

Some, if they have gone on well and possibly run for a while, yet if they fall, then they are ready to lie still and think all is lost ; and in this peevish fretting at their falls, some men please themselves, and take it for repentance, whereas indeed it is not that but rather pride and humour. Repentance is a more submissive humble thing. But this is what troubles some men at their new falls, especially if after a long time of even walking or running—they think their project is now spoiled, their thoughts are broken off : they would have had somewhat to have rejoiced in, if they had still gone on to the end, but being disappointed of that, they think they had as good let alone, and give over. O but the humble Christian is better taught ! His falls teach him indeed to abhor himself ; they discover his own weakness to him, and empty him of self-trust ; but they do not dismay him from getting up and going on, not boldly and carelessly forgetting his fall, but, in the humble sense of it, walking the more warily, yet not the less swiftly ; yea, the more swiftly too, making the more haste to regain the time lost by the fall. So then, if you would run this way, depend on the strength of God, and on his Spirit leading thee, that so thou mayest not fall. And yet if thou dost fall, arise, and if thou art plunged in the mire, go to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there ; bemoan thyself before thy Lord ; and if hurt and bleeding by thy fall, yet look to him, desire Jesus to pity thee, and bind up

and cure thy wound, washing off thy blood, and pouring in of his own.

However it is with thee, give not over ; faint not, run on. And that thou mayest run the more easily and expeditiously, make thyself as light as may be ; “ lay aside every weight.” Clog not thyself with unnecessary burdens of earth, and especially lay aside that which, of all things, weighs the heaviest and cleaves the closest, “ the sin that so easily besets us,” and is so hardly put off us, that folds so connaturally to us, and we therefore think will not hinder us much. And not only the sins that are more outward, but the inner close cleaving sins, the sin that most of all sits easily to us : not only our cloak, but our inner coat ; away with that too, as our Saviour says in another case ; and “ run the race set before us,” our appointed stage, and that “ with patience,” under all oppositions and discouragements from the world without and from sin within. And to encourage thee in this, look to such a “ cloud of witnesses,” that compasseth us about to further us ; as troubles, temptations, and sin, do to hinder us. They encountered the like sufferings, and were incumbered with the like sins : and yet, they ran on and got home. Alexander would have run in the Olympic games if he had had kings to run with : now, in this race, kings, and prophets, and righteous persons run ; yea, all are indeed a kingly generation, each one heir to a crown as the prize of this race.

And if these encourage thee but little, then “ look ” beyond them, above that cloud of witnesses, to the “ Sun,” the “ Sun of Righteousness : ” looking off from all things here, that would either entangle thee or discourage thee, taking thine eye off from them, and looking to him who will powerfully draw thee and animate thee. “ Look to Jesus,” not only as thy forerunner in this race, but also, as thy undertaker in it, “ the author and finisher of our faith.” His attaining the end of the race is the pledge of thy attaining, if thou follow him cheerfully on the same encouragements

that he looked to ; “ Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.”

“ When thou shalt enlarge my heart.” In all beings, the heart is the principle of motion, and according as it is more or less perfect in its kind, those motions which flow from it are more or less vigorous. Therefore hath the psalmist good reason, to the end his spiritual course may be the steadfaster and the faster, to desire that the principle of it, the heart, may be more enabled and disposed, which here he expresses, by its being enlarged.

What this enlargement of the heart is, a man’s own inward sense should easily explain to him. Surely it would, did men reflect on it, and were they acquainted with their own hearts : but most men are not. They would find the carnal, natural heart, a narrow, contracted, hampering thing, bound with cords and chains of its own twisting and forging, and so incapable of walking, much less of running, in this way of God’s commandments, till it be freed and enlarged.

The heart is taken generally in Scripture for the whole soul, the understanding and the will, in its several affections and motions ; and the phrase being here of an enlarged heart, it seems very congruous to take it in the most enlarged sense.

It is said of Solomon, that he had a “ large heart ” (the same word that is here), “ as the sand of the sea shore,” 1 Kings iv. 29 ; that is, a vast, comprehensive spirit, that could fathom much of nature, both its greater and lesser things. “ He spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop in the wall, and of great beasts and small creeping things.” Thus, I conceive, the enlargement of the heart compriseth the enlightening of the understanding. There arises a clearer light there, to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner ; to see the vast difference betwixt the vain things the world goes after, and the true

solid delight that is in the "way of God's commandments;" to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God, his excellency, and greatness, and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served. This is the great dignity and happiness of the soul: all other pretensions are low and poor, in respect of this. Here then is enlargement, to see the purity and beauty of his law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable, it is; that "his commandments are not grievous;" that they are beds of spices; the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.

And then, consequently, upon the larger and clearer knowledge of these things, the heart dilates itself in affection. The more it knows of God still the more it loves him, and the less it loves this present world. Love is the great enlarger of the heart to all obedience. Then nothing is hard, yea, the harder things become the more delightful.

All love of other things doth pinch and contract the heart, for they are all narrower than itself. It is framed to that wideness in its first creation, capable of enjoying God, though not of a full comprehending of him. Therefore all other things gather it in, and straiten it from its natural size; only the love of God stretches and dilates it. He is large enough for it, yea, in its fullest enlargement, it is infinitely too narrow for him. Do not all find it, if they will ask themselves, that in all other loves and pursuits in this world, there is still somewhat that pinches! The soul is not at its full size, but, as a foot in a strait shoe, is somewhere bound and pained, and cannot go freely, much less run: though another, who looks on, cannot tell where, yet each one feels it. But when the soul is set free from these narrow things, and is raised to the love of God, then is it at ease and at large, and hath room enough; it is both elevated and dilated. And this word signifies a "high

raised" soul, and is sometimes taken for proud and lofty ; but there is a greatness and height of spirit in the love of God and union with him that doth not vainly swell and lift it up, but with the deepest humility, joins the highest and truest magnanimity. It sets the soul above the snares that lie here below, in which most men creep and are entangled, in that " way of life which is on high to the just," as Solomon speaks.

Good reason hath David to join these together, and to desire the one as the spring and cause of the other ; an enlarged heart, that he may " run the way of God's commandments."

Sensible joys and consolations in God do encourage and enlarge the heart ; but these are not so general to all, nor so constant to any. Love is the abounding fixed spring of ready obedience, and will make the heart cheerful in serving God, even without those felt comforts, when he is pleased to deny or withdraw them.

In this course or race are understood constancy, activity, and alacrity ; and all these flow from the enlargement of the heart.

Constancy. A narrow enthralled heart, fettered with the love of lower things, and cleaving to some particular sins, or but some one, and that in secret, may keep foot awhile in the way of God's commandments, in some steps of them ; but it must give up quickly : it is not able to run on to the end of the goal. But a heart that hath laid aside every weight, and the most close-cleaving and besetting sin, hath stripped itself of all that may falter or entangle it ; it runs, and runs on, without fainting or wearying ; it is at large ; hath nothing that pains it in the race.

Activity : not only holding on, but running, which is a swift, nimble race. It stands not bargaining and disputing, but once knowing God's mind, there is no more question or demur. " I made haste and delayed not," as in this psalm the word is, did not stay upon why and wherefore. He

stood not to reason the matter, but ran on. And his love, enlarging the heart, makes it abundant in the work of the Lord, quick and active, despatching much in a little time.

Alacrity. All is done with cheerfulness, so no other constraint is needful, where this overpowering sweet constraint of love is. "I will run," not be hauled and drawn as by force, but "skip" and "leap;" as the evangelic promise is, that the "lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The spouse desires her beloved "to hasten as a roe and hind on the mountains of spices;" and she doth so, and each faithful soul runs towards him, to meet him in his way.

It is a sad heavy thing to do any thing as in obedience to God, while the heart is straitened, not enlarged towards him, by divine love; but that once taking possession, and enlarging the heart, that inward principle of obedience makes the outward obedience sweet; it is then a natural motion. Indeed the soul runs in the ways of God, as the sun in his course, which finds no difficulty, being naturally fitted and carried to that motion; he "goeth forth as a bridegroom, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."

This is the great point which our souls should be studious of, to attain more evenness and nimbleness, and cheerfulness in the ways of God; and for this end we ought to seek above all things this enlarged heart. It is the want of this makes us halt, and drive heavily, and run along upon little ground. O my beloved, how shallow and narrow are our thoughts of God! Most, even of those who are truly godly, are led on by a kind of instinct, and carried they scarcely know how, to give some attendance on God's worship, and to the avoidance of gross sin, and go on in a blameless course. It is better thus than to run to "excess of riot" and open wickedness, with the ungodly world. But, alas! this is but a dull, heavy, and languid motion, where the heart is not enlarged by the daily growing love of God.

Few, few are acquainted with that delightful contemplation of God, which ventilates and raises this flame of love. Petty things bind and contract our spirits, so that they feel little joy in God, little ardent active desire to do him service, to crucify sin, to break and undo self-love within us, to root up our own wills to make room for his, that his alone may be ours, that we may have no will of our own, that our daily work may be to grow more like him in the beauty of holiness. You think it a hard saying to part with your carnal lusts and delights, and the common ways of the world, and to be tied to a strict, exact conversation all your days. But the reason of this is, because the heart is yet straitened and enthralled by the base love of these mean things ; and that arises from the ignorance of things higher and better. One glance of God, a touch of his love, will free and enlarge the heart, so that it can deny all, and part with all, and make an entire renouncing of all, to follow him. It sees enough in him, and in him alone, and therefore can neither quietly rest on, nor earnestly desire, any thing beside him.

Oh that you would apply your hearts to consider the excellency of this way of God's commandments ! Our wretched hearts are prejudiced, they think it melancholy and sad. Oh there is no way truly joyous but this. "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord," says the Psalmist. Do not men, when their eyes are opened, see a beauty in meekness, and temperance, and humility, a pleasant delightfulness and quietness in them ? Whereas in pride, and passion, and intemperance, there is nothing but vexation and disquiet. And then, consider the end of this way, and of this race in it—rest and peace for ever. It is the way of peace, both in its own nature, and in respect of its end. Did you believe that joy and glory which are set before you in this way, you would not any of you defer a day longer, but forthwith you would break from all that holds you back, and enter into this way, and run on cheerfully in it. The persuasion

of those great things above would enlarge the heart, and make the greatest things here very little in your eyes.

But would you attain to this enlarged heart for this race? As you ought to apply your thoughts to these divine things, and stretch them on the promises made in the world, so, above all, take David's course; seek this enlargement of heart from God's own hand. For it is here propounded and laid before God by way of request: See what is my desire; I would gladly serve thee better, and advance more in "the way of thy commandments;" now this I cannot do till my heart be more enlarged, and that cannot be but by thy hand, "When thou shalt enlarge my heart." Present this suit often. It is in his power to do it for thee. He can stretch and expand thy straitened heart, can hoist and spread the sails within thee, and then carry thee on swiftly; filling them not with the vain air of man's applause, which readily runs a soul upon rocks and splits it, but with the sweet breathings and soft gales of his own Spirit, which carry it straight to the desired haven.

Findest thou sin cleaving to thee and clogging thee? Cry to him—Help, Lord! set me free from my narrow heart. I strive but in vain without thee; still it continues so. I know little of thee; my affections are dead and cold towards thee. Lord, I desire to love thee; here is my heart; and lest it fly out lay hold on it, and take thine own way with it. Though it should be in a painful way, yet draw it forth, yea, draw it that it may run after thee. All is his own working, and all his motive is his own free grace. Let who will fancy themselves masters of their own hearts, and think to enlarge them by the strength of their own stretches of speculation; they alone, they alone are in the sure and happy way of attaining it, who humbly sue and wait for this enlargement of heart from his hand who made it.

SERMON XI.

THE PATIENT AND DOCILE SUFFERER.

“I WILL go and return to my place,” saith the Lord by his prophet, “till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.” Hos. v. 5. The Father of mercies hides himself from his children, not to lose them, but that they may seek him, and may learn, having found him, to keep closer by him than formerly. He threatens them, to keep them from punishment. If his threatening work submission, it is well ; if not, he punishes them gently, to save them from destruction. He seeks no more but that they acknowledge their offence, and seek his face. Wonderful clemency ! For who can forbear to confess multitudes of offences, who know themselves ? And who can choose but seek thy face, that ever saw thy face, and that knows thee ? “In their affliction they will seek me early.” He that prays not till affliction comes and forces him to it, is very slothful ; but he that prays not in affliction is altogether senseless. Certainly, they that at this time are not more than ordinary fervent in prayer, or do not at least desire and strive to be so, cannot well think that there is any spiritual life within them. Surely it is high time to stir up ourselves to prayers and tears. All may bear arms in that kind of service. Weak women may be strong in prayer ; and those tears, wherein they usually abound upon other occasions, cannot be so well spent as in this way. Let them not run out in howlings and impatience, but bring

them, by bewailing sins, private as well as public, to quench this public fire. And ye men, yea, ye men of courage, account it no disparagement thus to weep. We read often of David's tears, which were no stain to his valour. That cloud which hangs over us, which the frequent vapours of our sins have made, except it dissolve and fall down again in these sweet showers of godly tears, is certainly reserved to be the matter of a dreadful storm. Be instant, every one, in secret, for the averting of this wrath, and let us now again unite the cries of our hearts for this purpose to our compassionate God, in the name and mediation of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more :

That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The great sin, as well as the great misery, of man is the forgetting of God ; and the great end and use of his works and of his word is, to teach us the right remembrance and consideration of him in all estates. These words do particularly instruct us in the application of our thoughts towards him in the time of affliction. The shortness and the various significations of the words used in the original give occasion to some other readings and another sense of them. But this we have in our translation being not only very profitable, but very congruous both to the words of the primitive text and to the contexture of the discourse, I shall keep it, without dividing your thoughts, by the mentioning of any other. Neither will I lead you so far about, as to speak of the great dispute of this book, and the question about it which is held. He that speaks here, though the youngest of the company, yet, as a wise and calm-spirited

man, closes all with a discourse of excellent temper, and full of grave, useful instructions, amongst which this is one.

“Surely it is meet to be said unto God.” This speaking to God, though it may be vocal, yet it is not necessarily, nor chiefly so, but is always mainly, and may often be only mental. Without this, the words of the mouth, how well chosen and well expressed soever they be, are to God of no account or signification at all. But if the heart speak, even when there is not a word in the mouth, it is that which he hearkens to, and he regards that speech, though made by a voice that none hears but he, and in a language that none understands but he.

But it is a rare, unfrequent thing this communing of the heart with God, speaking its thoughts to him concerning itself, and concerning him and his dealings with it, and the purposes and intentions it hath towards him ; which is the speech here recommended, and is that divine exercise of meditation and soliloquy of the soul with itself and with God, hearkening what the Lord God speaks to us within us, and our hearts echoing and resounding his words, and opening to him our thoughts of them and of ourselves. Though they stand open, and he sees them all, even when we tell him not of them, yet because he loves us, he loves to hear them of our own speaking : “Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet :” as a father delights in the little stammering, lisping language of his beloved child. And if the reflex affection of children be in us, we shall love also to speak with our Father, and to tell him all our mind, and to be often with him in the entertainments of our secret thoughts.

But the most of men are little within. Either they wear out their hours in vain discourse with others, or possibly vainer discourses with themselves. Even those who are not of the worst sort, and who possibly have their times of secret prayer, yet do not so delight to think of God and to speak with him, as they do to be conversant in other affairs,

and companies, and discourses, in which there is a great deal of froth and emptiness. Men think, by talking of many things, to be refreshed, and yet, when they have done, find that it is nothing, and that they had much better have been alone, or have said nothing. Our thoughts and speeches in most things run to waste, yea, are defiled : as water spilt on the ground is lost, cannot be gathered up again, and is polluted, mingled with dust. But no word spoken to God, from the serious sense of a holy heart, is lost. He receives it, and returns it into our bosom with advantage. A soul that delights to speak to him will find that he also delights to speak to it. And this communication is certainly the sweetest and happiest choice—to speak little with men and much with God. One short word, such as this, spoken to God in a darted thought, eases the heart more when it is afflicted, than the largest discourses and complainings to the greatest and most powerful of men, or the kindest and most friendly. It gives not only ease but joy, to say to God, I have sinned, yet, I am thine ; or as here, “ I have borne chastisement : I will not offend any more.” The time of affliction is peculiarly a time of speaking to God, and such speech as this is peculiarly befitting such a time. And this is one great commendation of affliction, that it is a time of wiser and more sober thoughts ; a time of the returning of the mind inwards and upwards. A high place, fulness, and pleasure draw the mind more outwards. Great light and white colours dissipate the sight of the eye, and the very thoughts of the mind too : and men find that the night is a fitter season for deep thoughts. “ It is better,” says Solomon, “ to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.” Those blacks made the mind more serious. It is a rare thing to find much retirement unto God, much humility and brokenness of spirit, true purity and spirituality of heart, in the affluence and great prosperities of the world. It is no easy thing to carry a very full cup even,

and to digest well the fatness of a great estate and great place. They are not to be envied who have them. Even though they be of the better sort of men, it is a thousand to one but they will be losers by the gains and advancements of this world, suffering proportionably great abatements of their best advantages by their prosperity. The generality of men, while they are at ease, do securely neglect God, and little mind either to speak to him or to hear him speak to them. God complains thus of his own people; "I spoke to them in their prosperity, and they would not hear." The noises of coach wheels, of their pleasures, and of their great affairs, so fill their ears, that the still voice wherein God is cannot be heard. "I will bring her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her," says God of his church. There the heart is more at quiet to hear God and to speak to him, and is disposed to speak in the style here prescribed, humbly and repentingly.

"I have borne chastisement." The speaking this unto God under affliction signifies, that our affliction is from his hand; and to the acknowledgment of this truth, the very natural consciences of men do incline them. Though trouble be the general lot of mankind, yet it doth not come on him by an improvidential fatality. Though "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," yet it "comes not out of the dust." It is no less true, and in itself no less clear, that all the good we enjoy, and all the evil we suffer, come from the same hand; but we are naturally more sensible of evil than of good, and therefore do more readily reflect upon the original and causes of it. Our distresses lead us to the notice of the righteous God inflicting them, and of our own unrighteous ways procuring them, and provoking him so to do; and therefore "it is meet" to speak in this submissive humble language to him. It is by all means necessary to speak to him. He is the party we have to deal with or to speak to, even in those afflictions whereof men are the intervenient, visible causes. They

are indeed but instrumental causes, the rod and staff in his hand who smites us : therefore our business is with him, in whose supreme hand alone the mitigations and increases, the continuance and the ending of our troubles lie. “ Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned ? ” Isa. xliii. 24. So Lam. i. 14, “ The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand.” Therefore it is altogether necessary in all afflictions to speak to him. And as it is necessary to speak to him, so “ it is meet ” to speak to him, “ I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.” These words have in them the true composition of real repentance, humble submission, and holy resolution. “ I have borne chastisement,” that is, I have justly borne it, and do heartily submit to it ; I bear it justly, and take it well ; Lord, I acquit thee, and accuse myself. This language becomes the most innocent persons in the world, in their sufferings. Job knew it well, and did often acknowledge it in his preceding speeches. Though sometimes, in the heat of dispute and in opposition to the uncharitable and unjust imputations of his friends, he seems to overstrain the assertion of his own integrity, which Elihu here corrects, you know, he cries out, “ I have sinned against thee : what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men ? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.”

Vain foolish persons fret and foam at the miscarriage of a cause they apprehend to be righteous ; but this is a great vanity and inconsiderate temerity in not observing the great and apparent unrighteousness in the persons managing it. But though both the cause and the persons were just to the greatest height imaginable amongst men, yet still were it meet to speak thus unto God in the lowest acknowledgments and confessions, that “ righteousness belongeth unto him, and unto us shame and confusion of face.” So says

the church, Lam. iii. "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandments." Though affliction is not always designedly intended as the chastisement of some particular sin, yet where sin is, and that is the case of all the sons of Adam, affliction coming in may safely be considered in its natural alliance with sin, and so press forth humble confessions of sin and resolutions against it. And thus in Lev. xxvi. 41, "They shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity;" shall take it humbly and penitently, and kiss the rod.

Oh that there were such a heart in us! that instead of empty words, that scatter themselves in the wind, our many vain discourses we hold one with another concerning our past and present sufferings and further fears, and disputing of many fruitless and endless questions, we were more abundantly turning our speech this way, unto God, and saying, We desire to give thee glory, and to take shame to ourselves, and to bear our chastisement, and to offend no more; to return each from his evil way, and to gain this by the furnace, the purging away of our dross, our many and great iniquities, our oaths and cursings, and lying, our deceit, and oppressions, and pride, and covetousness, our base love of ourselves, and hating one another; that we may be delivered from the tyranny of our own lusts and passions; and in other things, "let the Lord do with us as seemeth good in his eyes." Oh that we were speaking to God in Ephraim's words, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: turn thou me, and I shall be turned!" Words like these would stir his bowels; as it is said, that one string perfectly tuned to another, being touched, the other stirs of itself. When a stubborn child leaves struggling under the rod and turns to entreating, the father then leaves off striking; nothing overcomes him but that. When a man says unto God, Father, I have provoked thee to this, but pardon, and through thy grace I will do so no more; then the rod is thrown aside, and the Father of Mercies

and his humbled child fall to mutual tenderness and embraces.

“That which I see not, teach thou me.” The great article of conversion is the disengagement of the heart from the love of sin. In that posture, as it actually forsakes whatsoever it perceives to be amiss, so it stands in an absolute readiness to return to every duty that yet lies hidden, upon the first discovery. That is here the genuine voice of a repentant sinner, “That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

This is a very necessary supplication, even for the most discerning and clear-sighted penitent, both in reference to the commandment and rule for discovering the general nature and several kinds of sin, and withal for the application of this general light to the examination of a man’s own heart and ways, that so he may have a more exact and particular account of his own sins.

The former part of the petition is for the knowledge of the law of God, as the rule by which a man is to try and to judge himself. The most knowing are not above the need of this request; yea, I am persuaded, the most knowing know best how much they need it, and are most humbled in themselves in the conscience of their ignorance and darkness in divine things, and are most earnest and pressing in this daily supplication for increases of light and spiritual knowledge from him who is the fountain of it; “What I see not, teach thou me.” On the other side, the least knowing are often the most confident that they know all, and swelled with a conceited sufficiency of their model and determination of all things, both dogmatical and practical; and therefore are they the most imperious and magisterial in their conclusions, and the most impatient of contradiction or even of the most modest dissent.

The wisest and holiest persons speak always in the humblest and most depressing style of their own knowledge, and that not with an affectation of modesty, but under the real

sense of the thing as it is, and the sincere account they give of it, and that commonly when they are declaring themselves most solemnly, as in the sight of God, or speaking in supplication to him with whom they dare least of all dissemble. Whosoever he was that spake those words in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, surely he was a man of eminent wisdom and piety, and yet he begins thus : “ Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man ; I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy.” And though he was so diligent a student and so great a proficient in the law of God, yet how importunate a petitioner is he for the understanding of it, as if he knew nothing at all ! Besides the like expressions in other psalms, in that one psalm, the 119th, which, although of such length, hath nothing but the breathing forth of his affection to the word and law of God, how often doth David in it reiterate that petition, “ Teach me thy statutes ;”—so often, that a carnal mind is tempted to grow weary of it, as a nauseating tautology : but he made it still new with the freshness and vehemency of his affection ; “ Make me to understand the way of thy precepts ;—Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law—Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law ;” unseal mine eyes, as if they were still veiled and dark. These are the earnest and nobly ambitious desires that daily solicit holy hearts, and stir them up to solicit the Teacher of hearts to be admitted more into the secrets and recesses of divine knowledge ; not to those abysses that God intends should be secret still, and from which he hath barred out our curiosity, as the forbidden tree of knowledge, those secrets that belong to himself alone and concern us not to inquire after. And to be wading in those deeps is certainly the way to be drowned in them. The searcher of Majesty shall be oppressed with glory. Yet there is in man a perverse, preposterous desire to pore upon such things as are on purpose hidden that we

should not inquire after them, and to seek after useless empty speculations of them, which is a luxury and intemperance of the understanding, like unto that and springing from that, which at first undid us in the root. These are times full of those empty airy questions, and notions, in which there is no clearness nor certainty to be attained, and if it were, yet it would serve to little or no purpose, not making the man who thinks he hath found them out one jot the better or holier man than he was before. "What avails it," says a devout author, "to dispute and discourse high concerning the Trinity, and want humility, and so displease that Trinity?" The light and knowledge suited according to the intendment of this copy, is of another nature, such as purifies the heart and rectifies the life. "What I see not, teach thou me;" that is, of such things as may serve this end, that "if I have done iniquity, I may do it no more." This is sound and solid knowledge—such a light as inflames the heart with the love of God and of the beauties of holiness, and still, as it grows, makes those to grow likewise. Such are still, we see, David's multiplied supplications in that 119th Psalm; not to know reserved and useless things, but, "Hide not thy commandments from me. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me;" now what is it that thy creature and workmanship begs of thee? What is that which will complete my being, and make me do honour to my Maker? This is it—"Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."

You that would be successful supplicants in this request, wean your hearts from the vanity of desire. Such knowledge is as the cypress tree, fair and tall, but fruitless and sapless. Apply all you know to the purging out of sin, and intend all the further knowledge you desire to that same end. Seek to be acquainted with higher rules of mortification, and self-denial, and charity, than as yet you have either practised or possibly so much as thought on; that by these, your affections and actions may be advanced

to greater degrees of purity and conformity with the holiness of God. And for this end, beg of him to teach you what you see not in the exactness of the law and rule; and withal, which is the other thing in this word, that what you see not in the application of it and search of yourself, he would likewise show you; for in that we are commonly as undiscerning and dim-sighted as in the other. Even where men have some notion of the rule and their duty, yet they perceive not their own, even their gross declinings from it. Love is a blinding thing, and above all love, self-love; and every man is naturally his own flatterer: he deals not faithfully and sincerely with himself in the search of his own evils. Now this we are to entreat of God, to be led into ourselves, and to be applied to the work of self-searching by his own hand; not only to have a right apprehension of the law given us, but a true sight of ourselves. Oh how many hidden, undiscerned, yea, unsuspected impurities and follies are there in the hearts of those who are the most diligent in this inquiry; much more in the greater part even of such as cannot absolutely be denied the name of good men! Some honest intentions and good desires there are in them, but they are slothful and unwilling to go into this painful business of trying and judging themselves; and when they set to it, many secret corners, and, in those, many latent corruptions do escape their search. "Cleanse me from secret faults," says David; that is, not only those hidden from men, but even from myself, as is clearly his meaning, by the words preceding, "Who can understand his errors?" Therefore it is necessary that we should desire light of God. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord," says Solomon, "searching the innermost parts;" but it is a candle unlighted, when he does not illuminate it for that search. Oh what a deal of vanity and love of this world, envy and secret pride, lurk in many of our hearts, which we do not at all perceive, till God causeth us to see it, leading us in, as he did the prophet Ezekiel in the vision,

to see the idolatry of the Jews in his very temple, by which they had provoked him to forsake it and go far from his sanctuary; and having discovered one parcel, leads him in further, and makes him enter through the wall, and adds often, "Son of man, hast thou seen these? I will cause thee to see yet more abominations, and yet more abominations." Thus is it within many of us who should be his temples, but we have a multitude of images of jealousy, one lying hid behind another, till he thus discovers them to us. Oh what need have we to entreat him thus, "That which I see not, teach thou me!"

Now in both these, both in the knowledge of our rule and of ourselves, though there may be some useful subseriency of the ministry of men, yet the great teacher of the true knowledge of his law, and of himself, and of ourselves, is God. Men may speak to the ear, but his chair is in heaven who teaches hearts. Matchless Teacher! who teacheth more in one hour than men can do in a whole age; who can cure the invincible unteachableness of the dullest heart, "give understanding to the simple, and open the eyes of the blind!" So then, would we be made wise, wise for eternity, learned in real living divinity, let us sit down at His feet, and make this our continual request, "That which I see not, teach thou me!"

"If I have done iniquity;" that is, any iniquity that I yet know not of, any hidden sin, let me but once see it, and, I hope, thou shalt see it no more within me; not willingly lodged and entertained. This speaks an entire, total giving up of all sin, and is a proclaiming of utter defiance and enmity against it; casting out what is already found out without delay, and resolving that still in further search, as it shall be more discovered, it shall be forthwith dislodged, without a thought of sparing or partial indulgence to any thing that is sin, or that is like it, or that may any way befriend it, or be an occasion and incentive of it. This is that absolute renouncing of sin, and surrender of the

whole soul and our whole selves to God, which whosoever do not heartily consent to and resolve on, their religion is vain, and, which is here the point, their affliction is in vain. Whatsoever they have suffered, they have gained nothing by all their sufferings, if their hearts remain still self-willed, stubborn, untamed, and unpliant to God. And this makes their miseries out of measure miserable, and their sins out of measure sinful; whereas, were it thus qualified, and had it any operation this way towards the subjecting of their hearts unto God, affliction were not to be called misery, but would go under the title of blessedness; "Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, and teachest him out of thy law." That is suiting with this here desired, "I have borne chastisement: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more." Oh were it thus with us, my brethren, how might we rejoice, and insert into our praises all that is come upon us, if it had wrought or advanced any thing of this kind within us, this blessed compliance with the will of God; not entertaining any thing knowingly that displeases him; finding a pleasure in the denial and destruction of our own most beloved pleasures at his appointment and for his sake! Whatsoever is in us and dearest to us, that would offend us, that would draw us to offend him, were it the right hand, let it be cut off; or the right eye, let it be plucked out; or, to make shorter work, let the whole man die at once, crucified with Jesus, that we may be henceforth dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to ourselves, and alive only to God.

SERMON XII.

THE CONFESSION AND PRAYER OF FAITH.

JEREMIAH XIV. 7—9.

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake : for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee.

O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night ?

Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save ! yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name ; leave us not.

IF we look backwards and forwards in this chapter, we find the three great executioners of God's anger on the world foretold, as having received commission against this people.

In all troubles, felt or feared, this is still the great resource of them who are acquainted with it and can use it—prayer. And their labour in it is not altogether lost, even where the judgment is determined and unalterable, as here it was : for some mitigations of time and measure are desirable, and by prayer attainable ; and whatsoever there is of that kind, the prayers that have been made long before, have had a concurrence and influence in it. And always, at the least, prayer carries the personal good of them that present it ; if it return unto their bosom, as David speaks, without effect for others, it returns not thither empty ; it brings peace and safety thither with it ; they

save their own souls. The mourners, if they turn not away the destroyers' weapons from the city, yet they procure one sent along with them, with an ink-horn for their own marking and sparing; Ezek. ix. 3. And were there nothing in this, nor any following effect, prayer hath within itself its own reward. Did we know it, we should think so. The very dignity and delight of so near access to God, to speak with him so freely, this in itself is the most blessed and honourable privilege that the creature is capable of; it is a pledge of heaven, something of it beforehand, a standing in pretension to the life of angels: "*Angelorum candidati*," as Tertullian speaks; it is to be but "a little lower," as the word is, Psalm viii. 5. Many practise a form; few know the vital sweetness of it.

O my brethren, be aspiring to more heavenliness, and a higher bent of the soul in it than as yet you know, and use it more that way: use it for yourselves and others, this whole land, these kingdoms, the church of God through the whole earth. No times have we seen, wherein it hath been more needful, and none wherein less plentiful. There is no one that "stirs up himself to lay hold on God." Some, no doubt, there are in these times; yet there are so few, o general a decay and negligence is there in the zeal and frequency of prayer, that there is none to speak of. And is it not so now with us? Many discourse one to another, and yet most to little or no purpose: but little is spoken where nothing would be lost, in humble supplication to God. And this is the saddest sign of this long lasting trouble. O pity the kingdom and yourselves, and learn to pray!

This prayer of the prophet is made up of the two usual ingredients, confession and petition.

"O Lord, Jehovah." A chief point of prayer is the presenting of the soul before God, remembering to whom we speak, that it is to the great King, the holy God: which disposition this expresses, where it is indeed, when we say,

“O Lord,” or, at least, this should remind us, when we forget it, to have such apprehensions as we can reach of his glorious majesty. Consider whether we find our hearts filled with him when we are before him. Oh how seldom think we that he is God, even while we speak to him, and how quickly do we forget it, and let slip the thought! When we have any thing of it, how soon are we out of it, and multiplying vain words! For such are all those we utter to him without this. Oh pray to be taught this point of prayer, and watch over your hearts in prayer, to set them thus when you enter to him, and to call them in when they wander, and pluck them up when they slumber, to think where they are and what they are doing.

“Our iniquities testify against us.” Confession fitly begins. All the difference betwixt God and us lies in this, “our iniquities.” Now humble confession is one great article of pacification; it is a thing judgment certainly aims at, a thing mercy is mainly moved with. See Hos. v. 15; Psalm xxxii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 18.

When we are to encounter any enemy or difficulty, it is sin weakens us. Now confession weakens sin, takes away the power of accusations, anticipates the great accuser, leaves him nothing to say, takes off the stroke of sins testifying against us, says, You need not; I confess all, and more than you can say.

For this, a right knowledge of God’s law is requisite, and then a diligent use of it; laying it to our ways, as a straight rule to show our unevenness, which without it we discern not. Set that glass before you, but withal beg light from heaven to see by; otherwise your applications to this work of searching your hearts, and comparing them with the law, is but poring in the dark, where nothing is to be seen of your spots though you set the glass before you, and open the leaves of it. “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord;” but it is so when he lights it, and directs a man by it into himself, to see the secret corners and pollu-

tions that lie hid within him. Sin, discovered by this light, appears in its native vileness, and that makes lively resentments and confessions.

Their confession of sin is varied here in three several expressions, and no one of them is empty; the adding one to another testifying a deep sense, and each of them having much under it, when issuing from an awakened, sensible mind.

“Our iniquities testify against us.” This expresses a deep and clear conviction. Our iniquities are undeniable: they stand up and give in witness against us, and we cannot except against them, nor deny the charge they lay.

And thus it shall be with all transgressors in their day, and with each of us. It is not far off, our particular day, it is coming, when the most ignorant shall be forced to know, and the most obstinate and impudent shall be forced to acknowledge their iniquities. Such as now will not be warned and convinced, who hide their sin as men, like Adam; who show themselves in that his children; they, as he was, shall be called for, and forced to come out of the thickets, and be convicted of their disobedience. This men find sometimes in a day of distress, when some outward or inward pressure seizes on them, lays on the arrest, and brings them to stand and hear what these witnesses have to say against them. However, there is a day coming for this at the long run, a day of particular judgment for each one, and that great solemn day for all together. The light of that fiery day shall let them see to read the bill they would not look on sooner. If men would consider this, when sin is speaking them fair and enticing them, in how different a style it will afterwards speak, it would spoil the charm of it. As Solomon speaks of the “strange woman,” that “her end is bitter as wormwood,” so are all the ways of sin. Those same sins which looked so pleasing and friendly, and entreated thee, shall appear again in another tune and with other language, to witness against thee and cry for vengeance.

Men think sin vanishes as soon as it is acted, and forget it as if they were to hear no more of it, and know not that it shall all be forthcoming again, even thoughts, words, and actions. All is kept for a court day; "iniquities sealed up in a bag," as Job speaks, as writs to be produced in the process against them. Oh how little know you what the amazement is of a man's sins surrounding him, and testifying against him, that he is a rebel against God, and to be condemned! And no scarcity, such multitudes of them! one company succeeding another, as that word, Job x. 17; "thou renewest thy witnesses against me;" not by twos or threes, but by thousands, armies of them. This is more affrightful than to be encompassed with drawn swords, or to see a whole army march up upon a man; it were nothing to these bands mustered up. So Psalm l. 21; "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

There is no way to escape but by prevention, taking a day beforehand to judge thyself, and to call these witnesses, and hear them, and pass sentence. This would save labour. God is desirous to have the matter thus anticipated, and turns it over to thee, to judge thyself, that he may not judge. Why defer we? Is it not worth the while and the pains? And then for that day, when it would seem so terrible to have these witnesses stand up, thy safety is, having judged and condemned thyself, to take sanctuary in Christ, and make him thy Advocate to answer all for thee. He can and will do it to the full; yea, he hath already answered all that thy sins, were they many more, can say. Oh happy the man that takes this course! Sin not upon this account: none, surely, will do that. "These things I write unto you," saith the apostle, "that ye sin not;" but then, "if any man," not so minded, "do sin," here is the comfort, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." 1 John ii. 1.

"Our backslidings are many." This is the double dye of his people's sins; they are not simple transgressions,

but treacheries, revolts, breaches of promises, of covenant and vow, turnings back, goings out from God, adultery, prostituting their hearts to idols, to base lusts; a heart professed to be married to its Maker, running and gadding after strange vanities. And who of us hath not this sadly to say against himself? How often have I vowed myself thine, and with some kind of hopes and purpose to have been true to my vow; but how soon hath all vanished! Oh the unspeakable unfaithfulness, not only of common formal professors, but of real believers! And these provoke God highly, go most to his heart, to be slighted by his own, to whom he hath so particularly shown himself and imparted of his love.

“And we have sinned against thee.” This that comes last, seems to sound least; but I take it as meaning most: as if they would have offered at particular confession, and then seeing such a huge multitude and no end, were forced to retire, and shut up all in this general word. We might and would speak of many things, but they are too many, we are overwhelmed. What shall we say? “We have sinned against thee.” Thus Job, “I have sinned against thee; what shall I do unto thee?” As in David’s confession, Psal. li. 4; “Against thee, thee only have I sinned; thee” the great, the holy God, our God. This were our business, instead of much discourse and debate of things, to fall down and confess unto God; to begin at ourselves, our own breaches and backslidings, and then to add the public national guiltiness. Oh we are a sinful people and few lay it to heart! All ranks are highly guilty; and where are they who retire and mourn for their abominations? These, continued and multiplied, are the continuers and multipliers of our plagues, sword, and pestilence, and threatenings of famine. If you have a mind to do any thing for the land and for yourselves, your families and little ones, oh apply to this work, to confess and bewail our iniquities! It may

be, yea, I dare say, it shall be, the Lord will return and have mercy on us.

“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us.” In all our approaches unto God, it is a prime thing to take him up according to his name. This is the very ground of the access and confidence of sinners, and there is no coming near him without it. We have heard it, that “he is the Lord, merciful and gracious.” Not so much as confessions can be made without this, much less petitions presented. Instead of coming to fall down before him to acknowledge sin, the soul will run quite away, and though that were in vain, would seek to hide itself, that it might not at all appear. But apprehending his goodness and readiness to forgive, this draws the heart to him, and being drawn in, this makes it melt before him. In this some Christians mistake much, when they hold off from the apprehensions of God’s graciousness, to the end that they may be the more humble and deeply affected with their sins. No, no; this is that which warms, and softens, and makes the soul pliable, fit to receive any form from his hand. Therefore the people of God, and the prophets in their name, still lay hold on that, and interweave it both with their confessions and their petitions, as the main ground of their confidence in presenting both.

The petition is in these two words, which begin and close the text—“Do for us”—“Leave us not.” The rest is argument, backing and pressing the petition with familiar and pathetic expostulations; and in them, the whole strength of the argument lies in a mutual interest, that they are his people, and he is their God. But take the words as they lie.

“Do thou for thy name’s sake.” It is not expressed what or how, and it is best so: that is referred to him who knows what is best, which we do not. It is an act of grace in general that is sued for, but, for the way and time,

all is put in his hand. True it is, that sometimes prayer is and must be somewhat more particular, upon particular warrant, or upon account of the common liberty that God gives his children, to present freely the particular thoughts and desires of their hearts to him. But it is good always to close thus, or that it be understood so when not expressed, that we resign the matter to him, to make his own choice of things, and use his own way ; only we entreat his favour, and his owning of us and our condition, that he be for us and do for us. And this is safe and sweet, to let him choose. We often perplex ourselves about that which lies not in our way and is not our part to be busied in, what things shall be done. This he undertakes for, and will be careful of. Be not afraid. "Commit thy way," roll thy way "upon the Lord, trust on the Lord," and he will do it ; there is no more. In the Hebrew it is, Turn it over to him and be quiet, and let him alone ; he will do well enough. Besides that there is all reason for this, if men knew what peace of spirit there is in this resignation, they would choose it before any way that can be thought on ; and it never yet repented any one who chose it.

"For thy name's sake." This is the unfailing argument, which abides always the same, and hath always the same force. When nothing is to be said for ourselves but guiltiness, yet this name we may plead by. "Though our iniquities testify against us," though they return us harsh answers as from thee, speaking nothing but just refusals of our suits and rejecting of ourselves ; yet, Lord, remember thy own name, and from thence we look for a better answer. Do according to that, and "for thy name's sake," in regard of strangers and enemies, who will reproach thy name, in the ruin of thy people ; and "for thy name's sake," in regard of thy people's knowledge of it and confidence in it, who, in all their straits, do expect their help from thee. Thy promises made to them and thy covenant made with them, in these is "thy name," and they do

cast themselves and rely on it. Now see whether it may be for thy glory to cast them off. Whatsoever we are, look to thy own interest, and do for that ; “ Do for thy name’s sake.”

In the next clause, a part of his name is expressed, “ The Hope of Israel.” This is a piece of his royal style, by which he is known in the world. And in this appeareth the wonderful condescension and bounty of God to his creatures, to choose a number of persons, that he will pass his word to engage himself to be theirs ; not only to forgive us who are his debtors by our sins, but to become himself a debtor to us by his promises. And he loves to be challenged on them, and pressed with them. It is a maxim of court flattery, that mean persons ought not to urge a king upon his word ; but this greatest King takes nothing better from the meanest of his subjects. Lord, thou hast undertaken the protection of us thy people, and now it lies upon thee, in point of honour and truth, to save us.

“ The hope of Israel.” All people, and every man, have something they rely on and make their hope ; and they often choose the most broken, rotten hopes, which fail while they lean upon them, and not only fail, but hurt them, as Egypt proved to Israel. Therefore it proved as a “ broken reed,” which not only flew in pieces in their hand, but the splinter ran up into their hand and hurt them. How often have we found it thus, been disappointed, yea wounded by our vain hopes, “ pierced through with many sorrows,” as the apostle speaks of those who love and trust in riches ! Therefore Job disclaims this, that he never made gold his god ; xxxi. 24. There is a word of one of his friends, xxii. 25, rendered in our translation, “ the Almighty shall be thy defence :” the word is in the original, “ The Almighty shall be thy gold.” To those who account and make him so, he is both ; for they are rich enough in him in the greatest scarcity, and safe enough in him in the greatest danger.

But you who would look to it, inquire each of you well what is thy hope, what thy heart readiest turns to and cleaves to, to comfort itself in any distress. Yea, in the times of the greatest ease, what are thy thoughts most biassed and turned to with oftenest and deepest delight? Canst thou say, It is to God? that thy heart hath got that retreat, and is inured to that; is frequently there throughout the day; turns by or passes over husband, or wife, or children, or riches, or delights, or any thing that would stand in thy way, and stays not till it be at him, and there rejoices in his love; sits down under his shadow content and happy, willing that others should rule and share the world as they please? that thou dost not envy them, yea, canst even pity them, with all their gay hopes and great projects? yea, though thou do not find at all times, yea, possibly scarcely at any time, the sensible presence of God, and shining of his clear discovered love upon thee, yet, that still he is thy hope; that thou art at a point with all the world, hast given up all to wait on him, and hope for him, and dost account thyself richer in thy simple hope, than the richest man on earth is in his possessions? Then art thou truly so, for the hope of God is heaven begun, and heaven complete is the possessing of him.

“The Saviour thereof.” Not exempting them from trouble, but saving “in time of trouble.” The reason for Israel’s trouble lay in their own sin and security, and their abuse of ease and peace; but yet they were not left to perish in trouble, but had “a Saviour in time of trouble,” who was then most eyed and considered, and found to be so. In the furnace, both the faith of his people and the truth of his promises are tried.

The children of God are much beholden to their troubles for clear experiences of themselves and of God. And in this indeed is the virtue of faith, to apprehend God as “a Saviour in time of trouble,” before he come forth and manifest himself to be so.

Wicked men have their "times of trouble" too, even here, but have no title to this Saviour. If themselves, or friends, or means can help them, it is well; but they can go no further. But the church, the Israel of God, when all help fails on all hands, has one great resource that cannot fail, the strong God, her "Hope and Saviour in time of trouble" or straitness. When there is no way out, he can cut out a way through the sea, can divide their enemies, or whatsoever is their greatest difficulty, and make a way through the middle of it. Well might Moses say, "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help?" Deut. xxxiii. 29. Men are under-saviours in outward deliverances; so it is said, Neh. ix. 27, "Thou gavest them saviours:" but he is "the Saviour." All others have their commissions from him. All their strength, and all their success, is from him. Without him, no strength, nor wit, nor courage, avail; all falls to pieces when he withdraws his hand. "Give us help from trouble, for," says the church, "vain is the help of man." We have found this, if any people ever did, and have had real lectures to teach us to "cease from man; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Yet still we are ready to look to multitudes, or to the quality of men who undertake for us. But if we do so, yet shall that prove our shame and disappointment; and it shall never go well with us, till our dependence and confidence come clear off from all creatures, and we fix it entirely upon him who is "our shield and our strength."

Thus should a soul, in particular distress, especially in inward trouble, wherein the help lies most incommunicably and immediately in God's own hand, learn to trust him. And though thou art not clear in thy interest as a believer, yet plead thy interest as a sinner, which thou art sure of. God in our flesh hath enlarged the nation of Israel; all that will but "look to him," he is their "Saviour;" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Now

he hath styled himself the Saviour of sinners ; press him by that : Lord, I do “ look to thee,” do for me, O “ Saviour !” Help ! I am in trouble. So in any particular temptation, either to sin or to distrust, say, Now, Lord, here is an opportunity for thy power and thy grace to glorify itself. And though thou find thyself sinking, yet believe, and thou shalt not drown.

“ Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land ?” The main thing desired was, his constant abode with them. Some passing deliverances he had wrought ; but that was not enough. He came “ as a stranger, to stay a night,” refreshed them with a transient visit, and away again. Thus we may say, he hath still done for us. When we were in desperate straits, he came and helped ; but then we were left to such counsels as bred us new troubles. He hath not so evidently yet taken up his residence, though he hath built him a house amongst us, we trust, with that intention, to dwell with us. This we are to sue and entreat for.

“ Why art thou as one astonished ?” Why art thou looking on our miseries as an amazed stranger, as not concerned in our affairs or condition, and not caring what becomes of us ; “ as a traveller,” but passing through, and having no further interest nor regard ; or, “ as a mighty man that cannot save,” as Samson after his hair was cut, either as wearied or bound, or somewhat hindered, though strong enough ?

Now, Lord, look not on. Own our sufferings, and bestir thyself. Make it appear that “ thou faintest not, neither art weary,” nor that any thing can stand before thee and be thy hinderance. Break through our sins, the greatest hinderance of all ; let not these stop thy way, nor bind thy hands. For “ thou art in the midst of us :” though we see thee not so in thy work as we desire, yet here we know thou art in thy special goodwill and power, as thou art in our profession and homage done to thee as our King amongst us. That testifies thy presence. Thou canst not

so hide thyself, but there are still some characters of thy presence. "And we are called by thy name, thy people." If we perish, thy name being upon us, what becomes then of it? Therefore leave us not. Though thou strike us, yet stay with us, and we shall live in hope of favour and deliverance. If thou go not away, our cries and prayers, at least our miseries, will move thee.

These things make up our plea. We are a most unworthy people, yet we are called by his name, are in covenant with him; so his glory is interested. We must not let go this. And what advantage so great, as to have our interest wrapped up in his? His glory and our safety are in one bottom, to sink and swim together—then there is no hazard. Therefore keep close to his interest and his covenant, and beg his staying with us, and arising for us; and lay hold on him for this end. It is a pleasant violence; and were there many to use it towards him, our deliverance were not far off.

S E R M O N X I I I .

H O P E A M I D S T B I L L O W S .

WHAT “shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” said our Saviour, who was to lay down a ransom for it, and knew well that it would cost infinitely more than the world was worth. Yet most of men value their own souls at a far lower rate than the whole world, losing them for broken morsels of it; yea, many times for vain hopes that are never accomplished. And as these men make a miserable bargain, so, on the contrary, they that lose the world or any thing worldly, yea, though it were the whole, to save their souls, make a profitable loss of it. Nature teaches men to hazard and lose all for the life of the body, rather than lose it, although it proves many times very uncomfortable by the loss of these outward things; and yet the most part of men pass their whole life-time without one serious thought of the excellency and importance of their souls, whose life and happiness is of a higher nature, and neither consists in nor depends upon any thing here below. Hence it is, that while they use the helps of this present life, and the defences of it when it is in danger, and use them with so much diligence and attention, the means of that better life of their better part, their souls, they either use not at all, or so slightly and coldly that they never find salvation in them. You may find it some way in yourselves. The threatenings and preparations of men against you have awakened and roused you more to

think upon means of your temporal safety ; but how few are sensible and afraid of the wrath of God, who, as our Saviour tells us, can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell ! You want not frequent advertisement from the word of God, so plentifully preached, that many are perishing, one part in gross ignorance of God, another in profane and licentious living, and the greatest part in a formal and lifeless profession of religion, without the power of it ; and yet where are they who lay it to heart, and bestir themselves to rescue their souls from destruction ? Certainly, whatsoever men profess, it is unbelief that is the cause of impenitence. Men are not convinced of the purity of God's nature, nor sensible of the impurity of their own ; therefore they apply not themselves in good earnest to the work of repentance, and to reformation, the liveliest part of it. Labour then for a more active and practical knowledge of God and divine truths, such as may humble and renew your souls ; not only that you may be delivered from outward troubles that threaten you, but much more, that you may escape the wrath to come. And because neither the word preached, nor judgments, nor mercies that are set before you, are sufficient to quicken a dead soul or soften a hard heart, without the effectual concurrence of the Spirit of God, let us have recourse to the throne of grace by humble and earnest prayer, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ.

PSALM xlii. 8.

Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

Man "is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards," saith Eliphaz. And as it is the corruption and sinfulness of his birth and nature, that has exposed him to trouble, so nature usually sets him at work to look out for such things as may preserve and deliver him from trouble, or, at least, mitigate and temper the bitterness of it. And because there is not

any one worldly thing that hath either certainty or sufficiency enough to serve at all times, therefore worldly and natural men are forced to make use of variety, and are but badly served with them all. The believing soul hath but one comfort whereon he relies, but it is a great one, which alone weighs down all the rest. "Bread strengthens, and wine makes glad the heart of man:" but "God is the strength of my heart," says the psalmist, and the gladness of it too; "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increaseth." And therefore, while the rest are seeking after some scattered crumbs of goodness in the creatures, and saying, "Who will show us any good?" he fixes his choice upon this one thing, "the light of God's countenance." And it is the constant assurance of this, that upholds him. Waves beat upon him, yea, and go over him; "yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness" to shine upon him.

In this psalm we may perceive the psalmist full of perplexed thoughts, and that betwixt strong desires and griefs, and yet in the midst of them, now and then, some advantage, and intermixing strains of hope with his sad complaints; for immediately before, we heard nothing but the impetuous noise of many waters, "deep calling unto deep," in the former verse; we have here, as it were, a touch of the sweet sound of David's harp: "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me."

In the words we have David's confidence and David's purpose; the one suiting very well with the other—his confidence in God's loving-kindness; "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness"—and his purpose; "And in the night his song shall be with me."

It is true, the latter words, "In the night his song shall be with me," may be taken as a part of the expression of his confidence, taking the song for the matter or subject of the song, the goodness of God: as if he should say, Both in

the day and in the night, I shall find the sweet fruits of God's favour and loving-kindness. But not excluding that, I rather take it to be intended as his resolution, that it should be his custom, in the quiet season of the night, to look back upon God's goodness manifested to him in the actions and occurrences of the day; and thus entertaining his soul with that secret discourse, he would stir it up to the praises of his God, and withal, would join prayer for the continuance and further manifestation of it. David, as was hinted before, intermixes strains of hope, not that faint and common hope of possibility or probability, that after stormy days it may be better with him, but a certain hope that shall never make ashamed; such a hope as springs from faith, yea, in effect, is one with it. Faith rests upon the goodness and truth of him who hath promised, and hope, raising itself upon faith so established, stands up and looks out to the future accomplishment of the promise. Therefore the apostle calls faith "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Of all other hope it is true, it is the name of uncertain good; but this can say, "The Lord will command his loving-kindness."

"The Lord will command." What a sudden change is here! Would you think this were the same man that was even now almost overwhelmed? Thus faith always conquers, though seldom or never without a hard conflict. Not only assaulted by troubles without, but, which is worse, by incredulity within; nor assaulted only, but many times brought under; yet does it not succumb and give over, knowing that even after many foils, yet in the end it shall overcome.

His confidence you may consider, first, oppositely, and then positively, or simply in itself—oppositely both to his present trouble, and to his complaints wherein this trouble is expressed; and that is fitly implied, though it be not in the original.

Though the multitude and weight of Job's afflictions did

force out of him some bitter words, and made him look back upon the day of his birth and curse it, yet, faith recovers him from his distemper, and makes him look forward with joy, even as far as to the blessed day of his resurrection : "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God." The former words of impatience he spake indeed, but he adheres to these, and wishes that they were "written with an iron pen, and engraven in the rock for ever." Therefore we hear of him again in scripture as a righteous and patient man, but of these words of his impatience, not a word. In the 77th Psalm, what sad expostulations are those the psalmist uses ! "Will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ? Doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?" But see how he corrects them ; "Then I said, this is mine infirmity ; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Thus Jonah speaks in a strain much like this ; but there it was literally true, that God had "cast" him "into the deep." And here, "deep calls unto deep," yet in the midst of these deeps faith is not drowned ; you see it lifts up its head above water ; "Yet the Lord will command, &c." Yea, though it takes particular notice of God's hand in the affliction, yet it goes not to another hand for comfort. It is "thy" waves and "thy" billows, yet that same God, whose waves are likely to destroy me, will ere long "command his loving-kindness to shine upon me." So Job, xiii. 15 ; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." A wonderful expression of faith ! He says not, Though he afflict me sore, but, Though he slay me ; not, Though evil men or Satan should do it, but, Though "he" slay me, yet will I trust in "him." What troubled mind can imagine any thing harder against itself, than this ?

1. Learn then to check those excessive doubts and fears

by some such resolute word as this. Turn the promise first upon thyself, and then upon God. Consider that he hath promised life eternal to believers, and then say, Though I saw his hand as it were lifted up to destroy me, yet from that very hand will I expect salvation; for I have his word engaged for it, that if I believe, I shall be saved. I do not say, that a soul under temptation can assure itself, that God is already reconciled to it, and herein possibly lies oftentimes the mistake; for this reflex act of assurance, though it be our duty to seek after it, is itself rather a gift and reward than a duty. But the direct and proper act of faith is of perpetual use and necessity, and then most when there is least sense of assurance. And it is no other than a recumbency or reliance, a rolling over of the soul upon free mercy. That which breeds us much perplexity is, that we would invert God's order. If I knew, say some, that the promise belonged to me, and that Christ were a Saviour to me, I could believe. That is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just contrary. "I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." He believed it first and saw it afterwards. And in this same psalm, labouring to still his disquieted soul by elevating it above his troubles to look upon his God, he says to it, "Hope in him now," and, ere it be long, "thou shalt praise him for the help of his countenance," even while his countenance is withheld. And thus faith ought to triumph over spiritual fears and difficulties.

2. How incongruous is it, that outward dangers or trials should overmatch it! Will you trust God upon his word for salvation and eternal happiness, and be diffident for the safety and needful blessings of this temporal life, which life, in comparison, is but for a moment, and the best things of it but dross? Consider that you dishonour faith exceedingly, and degenerate from the believing saints of former ages. Indeed the promises of this life and that which concerns it, though godliness hath them, yet they are not so

absolute, nor are they so absolutely needful for you. But considering the wisdom and love of your heavenly Father, learn to compose your minds by it.

“I will not be afraid, though ten thousands of the people set themselves against me round about,” says David; and lest you think him singular, in the 46th Psalm it is the joint voice of the whole church of God: “We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.” This is the way to be immoveable in the midst of troubles, as a rock amidst the waves. When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city, he makes it firm as mount Sion, that cannot be removed. When he is in the midst of the soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands and roar like the billows of the sea, yet there is a constant calm within, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. On the other side, what is it but want of lodging God in the soul, and that in his stead, the world is in the midst of men’s hearts, that makes them shake like the leaves of trees at every blast of danger? What a shame is it, seeing natural men, by the strength of nature and by help of moral precepts, have attained such undaunted resolution and courage against outward changes, that yet they who would pass for Christians, are so soft and fainting, and so sensible of the smallest alterations! The advantage that we have in this regard is infinite. What is the best groundwork of a philosopher’s constancy, but as moving sands in comparison of the rock that we may build upon? But the truth is, that either we make no provision of faith for times of trial, or, if we have any, we neither know the worth nor the use of it, but lay it by as a dead unprofitable thing, when we should most use

and exercise it. Notwithstanding all our frequenting of God's house and our plausible profession, is it not too true, that the most of us either do not at all furnish ourselves with those spiritual arms that are so needful in the militant life of a Christian, or we learn not how to handle them, and are not in readiness for service? as was the case of that improvident soldier, whom his commander found mending some piece of his armour, when they were to give battle. It were not amiss, before afflictions overtake us, to try and train the mind somewhat by supposing the very worst and hardest of them; to say, What if the waves and billows of adversity were swelled and flowing in upon me? could I then believe! God hath said, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee," with a heap of negations; "In no wise, I will not." He hath said, "When thou passest through the fire and through the water, I will be with thee." These I know, and can discourse of them; but could I repose and rest upon them in the day of trial? Put your souls to it. Is there any thing or person that you esteem and love exceedingly?—say, What if I should lose this? Is there some evil that is naturally more contrary and terrible to you than many others? Spare not to present that to the imagination too, and labour to make faith master of it beforehand, in case it should befall you; and if the first thought of it scare you, look upon it the oftener, till the visage of it become familiar to you, that you start and scare no more at it. Nor is there any danger in these thoughts. Troubles cannot be brought the nearer by our thus thinking on them, but you may be both safer and stronger by breathing and exercising of your faith in supposed cases. But if you be so tender spirited, that you cannot look upon calamities so much as in thought or fancy, how would you be able for a real encounter? No, surely. But the soul that hath made God his stay can do both. See it in that notable resolution of the prophet, Hab. iii. 17; "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the

olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength ;"—and in that saying of David, Psal. xxiii. 4 ; " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." You see how faith is as cork to his soul, keeping it from sinking in the deeps of afflictions. Yea, that big word which one says of his morally just man, is true of the believer ; " Though the very fabric of the world were falling about him, yet would he stand upright and undaunted in the midst of its ruins."

In this confidence, considered in itself, we may observe 1, the object of it, " The loving-kindness of the Lord !" 2, the manner or way by which he expects to enjoy it, " The Lord will command it ;" 3, the time, " In the day."

1. The object ; " his loving-kindness." He says not, " The Lord will command my return to the house of God," or " will accomplish my deliverance from the heavy oppression and sharp reproaches of the enemy," which would have answered more particularly and expressly to his present griefs, but " will command his loving-kindness." And the reason of his thus expressing himself, I conceive to be two-fold. First, in the assurance of this, is necessarily comprised the certainty of all other good things. This special favour and benignity of the Lord, doth engage his power and wisdom, both of which you know are infinite, to the procurement of every thing truly good for those whom he so favours. Therefore it is, that David chooses rather to name the streams of particular mercies in this their living source and fountain, than to specify them severally. Nor is it only thus more compendious, but the expression is fuller too, which are the two great advantages of speech. And this I take to be the other reason—a man may enjoy great deliverances and many positive benefits from the hand of God, and yet have no

share in "his loving-kindness." How frequently doth God heap riches, and honour, and health on those he hates, and the common gifts of the mind too, wisdom and learning, yea, the common gifts of his own Spirit, and give a fair and long day of external prosperity to those on whom he never vouchsafed the least glance of his favourable countenance! Yea, on the contrary, he gives all those specious gifts to them with a secret curse. As he gave a king in wrath to his people, so he often gives kingdoms in his wrath to kings. Therefore David looks higher than the very kingdom which God promised him and gave him, when he speaks of "his loving-kindness." In a word, he resolves to solace himself with the assurance of this, though he was stripped of all other comforts, and to quiet his soul herein, till deliverance should come; and when it should come, and whatsoever mercies with it, to receive them as fruits and effects of this "loving-kindness;" not prizing them so much for themselves, as for the impressions of that love which is upon them. And it is that image and superscription that both engages and moves him most to pay his tribute of praise. And truly this is every where David's temper. His frequent distresses and wants never excite him so much to desire any particular comfort in the creature, as to entreat the presence and favour of God himself. His saddest times are when, to his sense, this favour is eclipsed. "In my prosperity I said, I shall not be moved." And what was his adversity that made him of another mind? "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." This verifies his position in that same psalm. "In thy favour is life." Thus, in the 63rd psalm, at the beginning, "My soul thirsteth for thee, in a dry land where no water is;" not for water where there is none, but, "for thee, where no water is;" therefore he adds in verse 3, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." And all that be truly wise are of this mind, and will subscribe to his choice. Let them enjoy this loving-kindness and prize it, because, whatever befalls them, their happiness and joy is above the reach of

all calamities. Let them be derided and reproached abroad, yet still this inward persuasion makes them glad and contented; as a rich man said, though the people hated and taunted him, yet when he came home and looked upon his chests, "*Egomet mihi plaudo domi.*" With how much better reason do believers bear out external injuries! What inward contentment is theirs, when they consider themselves as truly enriched with the favour of God! And as this makes them condemn the contempts that the world puts upon them, so likewise it breeds in them a neglect and disdain of those poor trifles that the world admires. The sum of their desires is, as the cynic's was of the sunshine, that the rays of the love of God may shine constantly upon them. The favourable aspect and large proffers of kings and princes would be unwelcome to them, if they should stand betwixt them and the sight of that Sun. And truly they have reason. What are the highest things the world affords? What are great honours and great estates, but great cares and griefs well dressed and coloured over with a show of pleasure, that promise contentment and perform nothing but vexation? That they are not satisfying, is evident; for the obtaining of much of them doth but stretch the appetite, and teach men to desire more. They are not solid neither. Will not the pains of a gout, of a strangury, or some such malady, to say nothing of the worst, the pains of a guilty conscience, blast all these delights? What relish finds a man in large revenues and stately buildings, in high preferments and honourable titles, when either his body or his mind is in anguish? And besides the emptiness of all these things, you know they want one main point, continuance. But the loving-kindness of God hath all requisites to make the soul happy. "O satisfy us early with thy goodness or mercy," says Moses, "that we may rejoice and be glad all our days," Psal. xc. 14. There is fulness in that for the vastest desires of the soul—"satisfy us:" there is solid contentment—that begets true "joy and gladness;" and there is permanency—

“ all our days.” It is the only comfort of this life, and the assurance of a better. This were a large subject to insist on, but certainly the naming of “ his loving-kindness” should beget in each heart a high esteem of it, an ardent desire after it. And if it do so with you, then know, that it is only to be found in the way of holiness. He is a holy God, and can love nothing that is altogether unlike himself. There must always be some similitude and conformity of nature to ground kindness and friendship upon, and to maintain it. That saying is true, “ Similarity of principles and tastes is the foundation of friendship.” What gross self-flattery is it, to think that God’s loving-kindness can be towards you, while you are in love with sin, which he so perfectly hates ! How can the profane swearer, or voluptuous person, or the oppressor and covetous, or the close hypocrite, worse than any of them, rest upon the loving-kindness of the Lord in the day of troubles ? No, surely ; but the terror of his wrath shall be added to all their other calamities, and they shall find it heavier than all the rest. God will not pour this precious oil of gladness, this persuasion of his love, into filthy vessels. Even his own children, when they grieve and sadden his Holy Spirit by unholiness, shall be sadly punished by the withdrawing of those comforting and sensible expressions of his love.

Labour then, you who as yet never tasted of this love, to know what it means ; forsake and hate that which hitherto has made you strangers to it ; for if you obtain this, it shall comfort you when those things cannot, but would rather prove your greatest torment. And you who have received any testimonies of it, entertain it carefully ; for it is your best comfort both in your best days and in your worst days too.

You would all gladly be delivered from the many evils that threaten you ; for many they be indeed, and peace is a great blessing. But suppose you were secured from all these fears, and he should command a sudden calm, which

truly he can do, would you then think yourselves happy ? That life of yours which you so fear to lose by fire or sword, though you had peace, would ere long fall into the hands of some ague, or fever, or consumption, and perish by them ; or at the longest, a few years will end it ; it is a lighted candle, which though nobody blow out, will quickly burn out of itself. But this loving-kindness is not so short-lived. It will last as long as your souls, and so long as it lasts they shall be happy. Those goods that you fear shall be pillaged and spoiled in war, how many hazards are they subject to even in peace ! Solomon tells you, that "riches oftentimes," though nobody should take them away, "make themselves wings and fly away." And truly many times the undue sparing of them, is but the letting of their wings grow, which makes them readier to fly away ; and the contributing a part of them to do good, only clips their wings a little, and makes them stay the longer with their owner. But this by the way. Howsoever, "in the day of death and in the day of wrath," as Solomon says, "they profit nothing at all." So then, though you may desire that God would command deliverance for you, yet if you would be truly happy, your greater and more earnest suit should be, that he would "command his loving-kindness" to appear to your souls. And having once obtained this, you may possibly be persecuted and endure hard trials, but one thing is made sure, you cannot be miserable. Nor shall you want temporal mercies and preservation too, so far as they are good for you. The inward assurance of this love shall carry you strangely and sweetly through all outward vicissitudes ; and when the day shall come, that all other comforts shall look pale upon you, then shall you find the worth and happiness of this more than ever before.

2. Observe the manner in which the psalmist expects to enjoy the object of his confidence : "The Lord will command," make it appear to me. Sometimes God is said to shut up and hide his love from his children, and that is a

mournful time with them. But we read not that he shuts out his love, and ceaseth altogether to have affection to those whom once he loved. And therefore, when he shows himself again in the gracious manifestations of his mercy, he is not said to begin anew to love them, but only to "command his love," which erewhile he had countermanded, to appear.

3. The time; "In the day." If you have a mind to take the day and night figuratively for prosperous and adverse times, it would lead you in that sense to observe David's constancy in God's praises; which was such that not only in the day of deliverance, but even in the night of distress, he resolved a song for God, and truly many times God gives his children in an afflicted condition more sweetness of spirit, more aptitude, not only to pray, but to praise, and more spiritual delight in himself, than in times of outward peace and prosperity. "He giveth songs in the night," saith Job; and you know the sound of music is most delightful in the night. But to take it properly, David is confident that in the several actions and occurrences of the day he should find the goodness and favourable assistance of the Lord; and then he resolves, which leads to the other part of the text, in the night time to meditate on that goodness, and to frame a song of praise to the Author of it.

And indeed what is the whole thread of our life, but a chequered twist, black and white, of delights and dangers interwoven? And the happiest passing of it is constantly to enjoy and to observe the experiences of God's goodness, and to praise him for them. David was a wise king and withal a valiant soldier, and yet we see he thought not this experience inconsonant with either of these two conditions. This precious book of Psalms, a great part thereof being his, testifies clearly, that prayer and praise were his great employment. A religious disposition of mind may not only consist with fortitude and magnanimity, but is indeed the best principle and cause of both, contrary to the wicked

and foolish opinion of profane persons. Whether of the two, do you think, might welcome a day of battle with most courage and resolution—he that had passed the preceding night in revelling and carousing, or he that had spent it in prayer, and obtained some assurance of a better life? Truly, if they went on with equal forwardness, there is no man, except he were an atheist, but would judge the one to be brutish fury and precipitation, and the other true valour.

“His song.” In the worst estate there is ever some matter of praise to be mixed with request; and truly we may justly suspect that our neglect of praises makes our prayers unacceptable.

“And my prayer.” In the best estate here below, praise must be accompanied with prayer. Our wants, and necessities, and straits, return daily upon us, and require new supplies of mercy; and prayer, if we know how to use it right, is the way to obtain them all.

“To the God of my life,” or, “the God that is my life,” This word is added, as the reason of all that went before. If you ask David why he repositeth so much upon the loving-kindness of God? what he means, to spend so much pains in praises and prayer to God? he answers, “Because he is my life.” He is the author and preserver of my temporal life, and all the passages and accidents of it are in his hand alone. He hath also given me, and he maintains in me, a spiritual life; yea, he is the life of my soul. It lives by union with him, as my body does by union with it, and he hath laid up life eternal for me. Would Christians think thus indeed, the light of this consideration would dispel their distrustful fears. Certainly there is atheism at the bottom of them; if not a denial or a misconception of God, at least a forgetfulness of God; Isa. li. 12, 13. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the founda-

tions of the earth?" Consider then, that men have no power over our present life, but by the appointment of God. And beside that, we have another life, which is infinitely more precious than this; a life spiritual, and which is the beginning of eternal life; and this is altogether out of danger from men. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." It is hid, and wicked men cannot so much as see it: how then should they take it from us, seeing it is hid? And that not meanly; it is "hid with Christ in God." What then shall become of it? Read the next verse, and read it to your comfort, for there is abundance in it, if you look right upon it. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory." They that are in God, being united to him through Christ, can never by any power be separated from him. It is an indissoluble union. Death itself, that is the great dissolver of all other unions, civil and natural, is so far from untying this, that it consummates it. It conveys the soul into the nearest and fullest enjoyment of God, who is its life, where it shall not need to desire that God would "command," or "send his loving-kindness," as it were, from a distance; it shall be then at the spring-head, and shall be satisfied with his love for ever.

SERMON XIV.

THE CONFIDENCE OF FAITH.

HABAKKUK iii. 17, 18.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

MOST men's industries and employments are chiefly without them, but certainly our main and worthiest business lies within us; nor is a man ever fit for the varieties and vicissitudes of time and affairs without, till he have taken some pains to some good purpose within himself. A dis-tempered discomposed mind is as a limb out of joint, which is fit for no action, and moves both deformedly and painfully. That which we have to do, my brethren, for which these our meetings are commanded of God and should be attended by us, and which we should follow out when we are gone from hence, is this, the reducing of our souls to God. Their disunion from him is their disjointing, and they are never right till they refix on him; and being there, they are so right, that nothing can come wrong to them. As they are not readily ensnared with ease and plenty, so neither are they lightly astonished with want and trouble, but, in the ebb of all other comforts, they can hold the prophet's purpose, to "joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their salvation."

This we may hear and speak of, but truly few attain it. I fear many of us are not so much as seeking after it and aspiring to it. A soul really conversant with God is taken up with him, all its affections work and move towards him, as the prophet's here : his "fear," his "joy," his "trust." This is a prayer, as it is entitled, but it is both a prophetic and an unusual one ; a prophecy and a song (as the word added imports) "of Habakkuk the prophet on Neginoth." The strain of it is high, and full of sudden raptures and changes, as that word signifies ; thus here, having expressed much fear in the foregoing words, a shivering trembling horror, he yet adds such a height of an invincible kind of joy—like the needle of the compass, fixedly looking towards him, yet not without a trembling motion. Thus we have the temper of the psalmist, Psal. ii. 11 ; "Rejoice with trembling ;" which suits well to so sublime an object ; joying in God, because he is good, yet with joy still mixed with holy awe, because he is "great." And this especially in a time of great judgments, or in the lively apprehensions or representations of them, whether before or after their inflicting ; whether they be on the people of God for their iniquities, or on the enemies of God for their oppressions and cruelties to his people, while he made them instruments for their correction. In both, God is formidable, and "greatly to be feared," even by those that are nearest to him. This we find in the prophets when seeing judgments afar off, long before their day, which they had commission to denounce. So this prophet here not only discovers great awe and fear at what he saw and foretold concerning God's own people, the Jews, but at the after reckoning with the Chaldeans, his and their enemies. When God comes to do judgment on the wicked, this will make even them who stand by and suffer not with them, to tremble ; yea, such also as are advantaged by it, as usually the people of God are, their enemies' ruin proving their deliverance. The majesty and greatness of

God, and the terribleness of his march towards them and seizing on them, as it is here highly set forth, this works an awful fear in the hearts of his own children. They cannot see their Father angry but it makes them quake, though it be not against them, but on their behalf. And this were our right temper, when we see or hear of the hand of God against wicked men, who run their own courses against all warning—not to entertain these things with carnal rejoicings, and lightness of mind, or with boasted insults; to applaud indeed the righteousness of God, and to give him his glory, but withal to fear before him, though they were strangers and no way a part of ourselves; and to have an humble sense of the Lord's dealing in it (Psal. lii. 6); and to learn to reverence God; “in all our ways to acknowledge him;” to be sure to take him along with us, and to undertake nothing without him.

And this fear of judgments falling upon others is the way not to feel them on ourselves. When God sees that the sound of the rod on others' backs will humble a soul or a people, he will spare the stroke of it. They who have most of this holy fear of God's anger, fall least under the dint of it. “Blessed is he that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief,” Prov. xxviii. 14. He that fears it not shall fall into it; he that fears and trembles at it shall escape. So the prophet here trusts for himself, ver. 16; “I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble,” and, upon this confidence, he rises to this high resolution, “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”

The words, to make no other division of them, are a conjuncture of a sad supposition, and a cheerful position or purpose.

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom.” This is a thing that may come, and possibly which the prophet did foresee would come, amongst other judgments: and it is of all other outward scourges the sorest, most smarting, and most sweeping; it cuts off most people, and can least be suffered

and shifted. It lieth amongst the rest in the storehouse of divine judgments. He who furnished the earth, and gave being by the word of his mouth to all these things, hath still the sole absolute power of them ; they obey his word of command, and, rightly looked upon, in our use of them and the sweetness we find in them, lead us to him as the spring of being and goodness. He is invisible in his nature ; in his works, most visible and legible. Not only the spacious heavens and the glorious lights in them, but the meanest things on earth, every plant and flower in their being and growing, yea, every pile of grass, declare God to us.

And it is a supernatural delight in natural things, to see and taste him in them. It is more pleasant than their natural relish ; it is the chief inner sweetness, the kernel and marrow of all ; and they that take not the pains, and have not the skill to draw it forth, lose the far better half of their enjoyments, even of the things of this earth. To think how wise he is who devised such a frame, how powerful he who made all these things, how rich he must be who still continues to furnish the earth with these varieties of provisions, how sweet must he be, whence all these things draw their sweetness ! But, alas ! we are brutish, and in our use of these things we differ little or nothing from the beast. We are called to a higher life, but we live it not. " Man is in honour, but he understands it not ; he is as the beast that perishes."

Now because we acknowledge God so little in the use of these things, therefore he is put to it, so to speak, to teach us our lesson in the want and deprivation of them, which our dulness is more sensible of. We know things a great deal better by wanting them, than by having them, and take more notice of that hand which hath power of them, when he withdraws, than when he bestows them.

Besides all other provocations and particular abuses of these things by intemperance and luxury, were it no more

than the very neglecting of God in his goodness, this calls for a famine, to diet us into wiser thoughts, and to remind us of our own and all other creatures' dependence on that God whom we so forget, as to serve our idols and base lusts upon his bounty. This was the case of Judah and Israel; Hos. ii. 8, 13. But when more sparingly fed and better taught in the wilderness, those mercies were restored again, and then all acknowledge the dowry of that blessed marriage with himself, which is so far beyond all account; ver. 14, 16.

What wretched ingratitude is it, not to regard and love him in the use of all his mercies! But it is horrid stupidity, not to consider and seek to him in their withdrawment, or in the threatening of it. Few have a right sense of his hand in any thing. They grumble and cry out, but not to him. As in the case of oppression, it is said, Job xxxv. 9, 10, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty; but none saith, Where is God my maker?" so of this very judgment of famine the prophet speaks, Hos. vii. 14, "And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me." They did not humbly and repentingly seek to God by prayer, but a natural brutish sense of their wants pressed out complaints; they howled as a hungry dog would do for bread. This is all that most men do, in years of dearth, or harvests threatening it. No beast in the mountain or wilderness is so untamed as the heart of man, which, when caught in God's judgments, lies and cries as a wild bull in a net. It is true, they are somewhat nearer sober thoughts in distress; and their grief, though merely natural, yet is nearer spiritual grief, than their mirth and laughter; but it must have a touch of the Spirit above to make it spiritual, to make it change to gold, to turn it to godly sorrow. No scourge carries a power of changing the heart with it; that is a

superadded work. Many people and particular persons have been beaten as in a mortar with variety of afflictions, one coming thick upon another, and yet are never the wiser, and yet "have not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Therefore, if you be afflicted, join prayer with your correction, and beg by it, that God would join his Spirit with it. Seek this in earnest, else you will be not a whit the better, but will still endure the smart, and not reap the fruit thereof. Yea, I believe, some are the worse, even by falsely imagining they are better, partly presuming it must be so, and partly, it may be, feeling some present motions and meltings in the time of affliction, which vanish, and presently cool when they are off the fire. Ay, but these two together make a happy man; "Blessed is he whom thou correctest, and teachest out of thy law."

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom." This sometimes does, and at any time may, befall a land; and it is very useful to put such cases. It is true, there is great odds betwixt real and imaginary distress; yet certainly the frequent viewing of its picture, though it is only in thy imagination, hath so much likeness as somewhat abates the strangeness and frightfulness of its true visage when it comes.

There is a foolish preapprehension of possible evils, which, whether they come or not, does no good, but makes evils to come perplexingly beforehand, and antedates their misery, and adds the pain of many others that will never come. These are the fumes of a dark distempered humour, vain fears, which vex and trouble some minds at present, and do not waste any thing of any grief to come after. But calmly and composedly to sit down and consider evil days coming, any kind of trials that probably, yea, or possibly, may arrive, so as to be ready to entertain them without astonishment; this is a wise and useful exercise of the mind, and takes off much of the weight of such things, breaks them in falling on us, that they come not so sadly

down, when they light first upon the apprehension. Thus, it is true, nothing comes unawares to a wise man. He hath supposed all, or as bad as any thing that can come, hath acquainted his mind with the horridest shapes, and therefore when such things appear, will not so readily start at them.

This I would advise to be done, not only in things we can more easily suffer, but in those we think would prove hardest and most indigestible—to inure the heart to them : not to be like some, who are so tender fancied, that they dare not so much as think of some things, the death of a dear friend or husband, or wife or child. That is oftener to be viewed rather than any other event. Bring thy mind to it as a starting horse to that whereat it does most startle—What if I should be bereft of such a person, such a thing? This would make it much more tolerable when thou art put to it. What if the place where I live were visited with all at once in some degree, pestilence, and sword, and famine? How should I look on them? Could my mind keep its own place and standing, fixed on God in such a case? What if I were turned out of my good furniture and warm house, and stripped not only of accessory, but necessary things, as here he supposes not only the failing of delicacies, the fig-trees, wine, and olives, but of common necessary food, the fields not yielding meat, and the flocks cut off : my little ones crying for bread, and none for them? You little know what the tenderest and delicatest among you may be put to. These times have given many real instances, within these kingdoms, of strange changes in the condition of all ranks of persons, Or think, if thou abhorrest that, What if I were smitten with blotches or loathsome sores on my flesh, or if, by any accident, I should lose an arm, or an eye, or both eyes? What if extreme poverty, and sickness, and forsaking of friends, come all at once? Could I welcome these, and make up all in God; find riches, and friends and fulness in him? Most men, if they would

speak truly to such cases, must declare them insufferable—I were undone if such a thing befell me, or such a comfort were taken from me. Most would cry out, as Micah did, “Ye have taken away my gods;” for so are these things our hearts cleave to and principally delight in. He that worships mammon, his purse is the sensiblest piece of him; he is broken, if fire or ravage of war throw him out of his nest and empty it. He that makes his “belly his god,” how could he endure the case the prophet puts here, the failing of vines, of flocks, and herds?

It were good to add to the supposition of want, somewhat of the reality of it; sometimes, to abridge thyself of things thou desirest and lovest, to inure thy appetite to a refusal of what it calls for; to practise somewhat of poverty, to learn to need a few things.

It is strange, men should be so foolish as to tie themselves to these things, which have neither satisfying content in them, nor certain abode. And “why shouldst thou set thine eyes on things which are not,” says Solomon, on a nonentity, a fancy? How soon may you be parted! He who is the true God, God alone, how soon can he pull these false gods from you, or you from them! “What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?” Like that case in the parable, Luke xii. 19; “Soul, take thine ease.” A strange inference from full barns! That were sufficient provision for a horse, a fit happiness for it; but for a soul, though it were to stay, how gross and base a portion! But it cannot stay; “This night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

The only firm position is this of the prophet, “Yet will I rejoice in the Lord.” And such times indeed are fit to give proof of this, to tell thee whether it be so indeed, where thy heart is built. While thy honour, and wealth, and friends are about thee, it is hard to know whether these props bear thee up, or another, an invisible Supporter; but when these are plucked away, and thou art destitute

round about, then it will appear if thy strength be in God, if these other things were but flourishes about thee, and thou laidst no weight on them at all. He that leans on these, must fall when these fall, and his "hope is cut off," and his "trust as a spider's web." "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand." They that clasp their hearts about their houses or estates, within a while they are either sadly pulled asunder, or swept away together.

But O the blessed, the high condition of a soul set on God, untied, independent from all things beside him, its whole dependence and rest placed on him alone, sitting loose to all the world, and so not stirred with alterations! Yea, amid the turnings upside down of human things, if the frame of the heaven and earth were falling to pieces, the heart founded on him who made it abides unmoved: "the everlasting arms are under it," and bear it up.

Do ye believe, my brethren, that there is such a thing, that it is no fancy? Yea, all is but fancy beside it. Do you believe this? Why then is one day after another put off, and this not attained, nor the soul so much as entered or engaged to a serious endeavour after it, looking on all things else, compared to this noble design, as vanity? How often and how easily are their joys damped, who rejoice in other things, and their hopes broken? What they expected most soon prove a lie, as the word spoken of the olive, here signifies: as if the "labour" of it should lie—a fair vintage or harvest promised, and either withered with drought or drowned with rain; indeed it lies at the best. But the soul that places its joy on God is still fresh and green, when all are withered about it, Jer. xvii. 8. "Acquaint thyself with him" betimes in ease. It is a sad case to be making acquaintance with him when thou shouldst most make use of his friendship, and find comfort in his love.

Now this joy in God cannot remain in an impure unholy soul, any more than heaven and hell can mix together. An

impure, unholy soul, I call not that which is stained with sin, for no other are under the sun ; all must then quit all pretensions to that estate : but such a one as willingly entertains any sinful lust or way of wickedness. That delight and this are directly opposite. And certainly the more the soul is refined from all delights of sin, yea, even from sinless delights of sense and of this present world, it hath the more capacity, the fitter and the larger room, for this pure heavenly delight.

No language can make a natural man understand what this thing is "to rejoice in God." Oh it is a mystery ! Most men mind poor childish things, laughing and crying in a breath at trifles ; easily puffed up, and as easily cast down. But even the children of God are too little acquainted with this their portion. Which of you find this power in the remembrance of God, that it doth overflow and drown all other things, both your worldly joys and worldly sorrows, that you find them not ? And thus it would be if we knew him. Is he then our Father, and yet we know him not ?

Although all should fail, yet rejoice in him who fails not, who alters not. He is still the same in himself, and to the sense of the soul that is knit to him, is then sweetest when the world is bitterest. When other comforts are withdrawn, the loss of them brings this great gain, so much the more of God and his love imparted, to make all up. They that ever found this, could almost wish for things that others are afraid of. If we knew how to improve them, his sharpest visits would be his sweetest ; thou wouldst be glad to catch a kiss of his hand while he is beating thee, or pulling away something from thee that thou lovest, and bless him while he is doing so.

"Rejoice in God, although the fig-tree blossom not." Yea, rejoice in these hardest things as his doing. A heart rejoicing in him, delights in all his will, and is surely provided for the most firm joy in all estates ; for if nothing can come

So pass beside or against his will, then cannot that soul be vexed which delights in him, and hath no will but his, but follows him in all times, in all estates, not only when he shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower which follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days : when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So the soul that moves after God, keeps that course when he hides his face ; is content, yea, is glad at his will in all estates, or conditions, or events. And though not only all be withered and blasted without, but the face of the soul little better within to sense, no flourishing of graces for the present, yet it rejoices in him, and in that everlasting covenant that still holds, "ordered in all things and sure," as the sweet singer of Israel sweetly expresses it. "For this," says he, "is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." That is a strange "although," and yet he is satisfied even in that.

This joy in God, as "my God, the God of my salvation," ought to exercise the soul in the darkest and worst times ; and it ought to stick to it, not to let go this confidence, still expecting salvation from him, and resting on him for it, though not having those senses and assurances that thou desirest. This weak believers are easily beaten from, by temptation. But we are to stand to our right in him, even when we see it not. And when it is said to thee as in Psalm iii. that "there is no help for thee in God," tell all that say so, they lie. "He is my God, my glory, and the lifter up of my head ;" as there he speaks.

Rejoice in him still as "thy" God ; or, at any rate, rejoice in him as God. "I will rejoice in Jehovah," glad that he is God, that his enemies cannot unsettle or reach his throne, that he rules and is glorious in all things, that he is self-blessed and needs nothing. This is the purest and highest kind of rejoicing in him, and is certainly most distant and most free from alteration, and hath indeed most of heaven in it.

SERMON VX.

THE BELIEVER A HERO.

PSALM cxii. 7.

*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed,
trusting in the Lord.*

ALL the special designs of men agree in this—they seek satisfaction and quietness of mind, that is, happiness. This then is the great question, Who is the happy man? It is here resolved, ver. 1 ; “ Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth in his commandments.”

This blessedness is unfolded, like a rich landscape, that we may view the well-mixed colours, the story and tissue of it, through the whole alphabet in capital letters. And take all and set them together, it is a most full and complete blessedness, not a letter wanting to it. Amongst the rest, that which we have in these words is of a greater magnitude and brightness than many of the rest ; “ He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.”

Well may the psalm begin with a Hallelujah, a note of praise to him in whom this blessedness lies. Oh what a wretched creature were man, if not provided with such a portion ! Without which there is nothing but disappointment, and thence the racking torment and vexation of a disquieted mind, still pursuing somewhat that he never overtakes.

The first words are the inscription, “ the blessedness of that man,” &c. So the particulars follow ; where outward blessings are so set, as that they look and lead higher, pointing at their end, the infinite goodness whence they

flow, and whither they return and carry along with them this happy man.

And these promises of outward things are often evidently accomplished to the righteous and their seed after them, and that commonly after they have been brought very low. But when it is otherwise with them, they lose nothing. It is good for many, yea, it is good for all the godly, that they should have less of these lower things, in order to raise their eye to look after higher—the eye of all, both of those who are held somewhat short, and of those that have abundance in the world.

These temporal promises were more abounding and more frequently fulfilled in their very kind, in the times of the law; yet still the right is constant, and all ages do give clear examples of the truth of this word. Where it is thus, it is a blessing created by its aspect to this promise, and so differs from the prosperity of ungodly men; and where it is otherwise with the righteous, and their seed, it is no shift, but a most solid comfort, to turn their eyes to a higher compensation.

But howsoever it go with them, this still holds, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.” Notwithstanding the hardest news that can come to his ears of any thing that concerns either himself, or his children, or the rest of God’s children in his charge in the world, “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

First, let us take a view of the character of this blessed man, Who is it that is thus undaunted? “The man that feareth God.”

All the passions are but several ebbings and flowings of the soul, and their motions are the signs of its temper, which way it is carried; and it is mainly to be remarked by the beating of its pulse. If our desires, and hopes, and fears, be in the things of this world and the interests of flesh, this is their distemper and disorder, the soul is in a continual fever; but if they move Godwards, then is it

composed and calm, in a good temper and healthful state, fearing and loving him, desiring him, and nothing but him, waiting for him, and trusting in him. And when any one affection is right and in a due aspect to God, all the rest are so too ; for they are radically one. And he is the life of that soul which is united to him ; and so in him it moves in a peculiar spiritual manner, as all do naturally in the dependence of their natural life on him who is the Fountain of life.

Thus we have here this “fear of God,” as often elsewhere, set out as the very substance of holiness and evidence of happiness. And that we may know there is nothing either base or grievous in this fear, we have joined with it delight and trust ; “That delighteth greatly in his commandments”—which is the badge of love to him—to observe them, and that with delight, and with exceeding great delight. So then, this fear is not that which love casts out, but that which love brings in. This fear follows and flows from love. It is a fear to offend, whereof nothing is so tender as love, and that, in respect of the greatness of God, hath in it withal an humble reference. There is in all love a kind of reverence, a cautious and respective wariness towards the party loved ; but especially in this, where not only we stand in a lower relation, as children to our Father, but the goodness which draws our love doth infinitely transcend our measures and reach ; therefore there is a “rejoicing with trembling,” and an awful love, a “fearing the Lord and his goodness.” This is both fear and trust. The heart touched by the Spirit of God, as the needle touched with the loadstone, looks straight and speedily to God, yet, still with trembling, being filled with this holy fear.

“That delighteth.” Oh this is not ~~only~~ to do them, but to do them with delight. There is somewhat within that is connatural and symbolical with them. Yea, this very law itself is writ within, not standing as a hard taskmaster

over our head, but impressed within as a sweet principle in our hearts, and working from thence naturally. This makes a soul find pleasure in the purging out of sensual pleasures, and ease in doing violence to corrupt self, even undoing it for God, having no will but his. The remainders of sin and self in our flesh will be often rising up, but this predominant love dispels them. So this fear works with delight.

And further ; that we may know how serene and sweet a thing it is, it is here likewise joined with confidence : “Trusting in the Lord,” a quickening confidence always accompanying it ; and so undoubtedly it is a blessed thing. “Blessed is he that feareth.” Fear sounds rather quite contrary, hath an air of misery ; but ask who is feared—“That feareth the Lord.” That touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not : “he shall not be afraid.” All petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear, as a spirit inured with great things is not stirred nor affected at all with small matters. And this great fear is as sweet and pleasing, as those little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say, If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased. No matter who despise me, if he account me his. Though all forsake me, my dearest friends grow estranged, and look another way, if he reject me not, this is my only fear, and for that I am not perplexed ; I know he will not. As they answered Alexander, when he sent to inquire what they most feared, thinking possibly they would have said, lest he should invade them, but their answer was, “We fear nothing but lest heaven should fall upon us,” which they did not fear neither ; so a believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, lest the anger of God should fall upon him ; he fears that, that is, he accounts that ~~on~~ terrible ; but yet he doth not fear, doth not apprehend it will fall on him ; he is ~~better~~ persuaded of the goodness of his God. So this fear is still joined with trust, as here, so often elsewhere ; Psal. xxxiii. 18 ; xl. 3 ; cxlvii. 11.

There is no turbulency in this fear ; it is calm and sweet. Even that most terrible evil, that which this fear properly apprehends and flies, sin, yet the fear of that goes not to a distraction. Though there is little strength, and many and great enemies, mighty Anakims of temptations from without and corruptions within, and so good reason for a holy humble fear and self distrust, yet this should not beat us off; yea, it is most fit to put us on to trust in him who is our strength. Courage! the day shall be ours. Though we may be often foiled and down, and sometimes almost at a hopeless point, yet our Head is on high. He hath conquered for us, and shall conquer in us. Therefore, upon this confidence, so fear as not to fear. " Why should I fear in the days of evil," says the Psalmist, " when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?" which I take, is some grievous affliction, and that with a visage of punishment of sin; guiltiness is to be read in it; yet does he not fear. If I " trusted in wealth," and " boasted myself in the multitude of riches," then, that being in hazard, I must fear: leaning on that, it failing, I might fall. But this is my confidence—" God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me." Wealth cannot, but he can. It buys not a man out from his hand, but he buys from the hand of the grave; so the word is. For the visible heavens even in their fall, and the dissolution of nature, would not affright a believer.

Alas! most persons have dull or dim apprehensions and shallow impressions of God; therefore they have little either of this fear or of this trust. God is not in all their thoughts, but how to compass this or that design; and if they miss one, then how to compass another: they are cast from one wave upon another. And if at any time they attain their purpose, they find it but wind, a handful of nothing, far from what they fancied it.

O my brethren, my desire is, that the faces of your souls were but once turned about, that they were towards him,

looking to him, continually fearing him, delighting, trusting in him, making him your all. Can any thing so elevate and ennoble the spirit of a man, as to contemplate and converse with the pure ever-blessed Spring and Father of spirits? Beg that you may know him, that he would reveal himself to you; for otherwise no teaching can make him known. It is to light candles to seek the sun, to think to attain to this knowledge without his own revealing it. If he hide his face, who then may behold him? Pray for this quickening knowledge, such a knowledge as will effectually work this happy fear and trust.

You who have attained anything of it, desire and "follow on to know the Lord;" particularly so as that your hearts may repose on him. So fear as that you may not fear. He would have our spirits calm and quiet; for when they are in a hurry and confusion, they are then fit for nothing; all within makes a jarring unpleasant noise, as of an instrument quite out of tune.

This fear of God is not, you see, a perplexing doubting and distrust of his love. On the contrary, it is a fixed resting and trust on his love. Many who have some truth of grace, are, through weakness, filled with disquieting fears; but possibly, though they perceive it not, it may be in some a point of wilfulness, a little latent undiscerned affectation of scrupling and doubting, placing much of religion in it. True, where the soul is really solicitous about its interest in God, that argues some grace; but being vexingly anxious about it, argues that grace is low and weak. A spark there is discovered by that smoke; but the great smoke still continuing, and nothing seen but it, argues there is little fire, little faith, little love.

And this, as it is unpleasant to thyself, so is it to God, as smoke to the eyes. What if one should be always questioning with his friend whether he loved him or not, and upon every little occasion were ready to think he doth not? How would this disrelish their society together, though truly

loving each other ! The far more excellent way and more pleasing both to ourselves and to God, would be to resolve on humble trust, reverence, and confidence, being most afraid to offend, delighting to walk in his ways, loving him, and his will in all, and then resting persuaded of his love, though he chastise us. And even though we offend him, and see our offences in our chastisements, yet he is good, "plenteous in redemption," ready to forgive ; therefore "let Israel trust and hope." Let my soul roll itself on him, and adventure there all its weight. He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled nor burdened with it.

The heart of a man is not sufficient for self-support ; therefore naturally it seeks out some other thing to lean and rest itself on. The unhappiness is, for the most part, that it seeks things below itself ; but these, being both so mean and so uncertain, cannot be a firm and certain stay to it. These things are not fixed themselves ; how can they then fix the heart ? Can a man have firm footing on a quagmire or moving sands ? Therefore, men are forced in these things still to shift their seat, and seek about from one to another, still rolling and unsettled. The believer only hath this advantage ; he hath a rest high enough and sure enough, out of the reach of all hazards. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

The basis of this happiness is, "He trusteth in the Lord." So the "heart is fixed ;" and so fixed it "fears no evil tidings."

This trust is grounded on the word of God, revealing the power and all-sufficiency of God, and withal his goodness, his offer of himself to be the stay of souls, his commanding us to rest on him. People wait on I know not what persuasions and assurances, but I know no other to build faith on, than the word of promise, the truth and faithfulness of God opened up, his wisdom, and power, and goodness, as the stay of all those who, renouncing all other props, will

venture on it and lay all upon him. "He that believes sets to his seal that God is true;" and so he is sealed for God; his portion and interest are secured. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." This is the way to have peace and assurance, which many look for first, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is steady on thee, because he trusteth in thee," Isa. xxvi. 3. So here, the heart is fixed by trusting. Seek then clearer apprehensions of the faithfulness and goodness of God, hearts more enlarged in the notion of free grace and the absolute trust due to it; thus shall they be more established and fixed in all the rollings and changes of the world.

"His heart is fixed" or "prepared," ready dressed and in arms for all services, resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures and stand its ground. God is unchangeable, and therefore faith is invincible. That sets the heart on him, fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then let winds blow and storms arise, it cares not.

This firm and close cleaving unto God hath in it of the affection which is inseparable from this trust, love joined with faith, and so a hatred of all ways and thoughts that alienate and estrange from God, that remove and unsettle the heart. The holiest, wariest heart is surely the most believing and fixed heart. If a believer will adventure on any one way of sin, he will find that it will unfix him and shake his confidence, more than ten thousand hazards and assaults from without. These are so far from moving, that they settle and fix the heart commonly more, causing it to cleave the closer and nearer unto God; but sinful liberty breeds disquiet and disturbs all. Where sin is, there will be a storm. The wind within the bowels of the earth makes the earthquake.

Would you be quiet and have peace within in troublous times? Keep near unto God; beware of any thing that may interpose betwixt you and your confidence. "It is good for me," says the Psalmist, "to be near God;" not only

to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to him and dwell in him ; so the word imports. Oh the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms ! Thus, once trusting and fixed, then no more fear : he is “not afraid of evil tidings.” Whatsoever sound is terrible in the ears of men, the noise of war, news of death, or even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment, he hears all this undisquieted. Nothing is unexpected. Being once fixed on God, then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, the most terrible, and look for them ; not troubled before trouble comes with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though not thought on particularly before, yet the heart is not afraid of the news of it, because it is “fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Nothing can shake that foundation, nor dissolve that union ; therefore no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, how strange and unforeseen soever to it. All are foreseen to my God on whom I trust, yea, are fore-contrived and ordered by him. This is the impregnable fortress of a soul : All is at the disposal and command of my God : my Father rules all : what need I fear ?

Every one trusts to somewhat. As for honour, and esteem and popularity, they are airy vain things ; but riches seem a more solid work and fence, yet they are but a tower in conceit, not really. “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit ;” but “the name of the Lord is a strong tower” indeed. This is the thing that all seek, some fence and fixing ; here it is. We call you not to vexation and turmoil, but from it ; and as St. Paul said, “Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Ye blindly and fruitlessly seek after the show. The true aiming at this fixedness of mind will secure that, though they fall short, yet by the way they will light on very pretty things that have some virtue in them, as they that seek the philosopher’s stone ; but the believer hath the

thing, the secret itself of tranquillity and joy, and this turns all into gold, their iron chains into a crown of gold ; “ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”

This is the blessed and safe estate of believers. Who can think they have a sad heavy life ? Oh it is the only lightsome, sweet, cheerful condition in the world. The rest of men are poor, rolling, unstayed things, every report shaking them, as the leaves of trees are shaken with the wind, yea, lighter than so, as the chaff that the wind drives to and fro at its pleasure. Would men but reflect and look in upon their own hearts, it is a wonder what vain childish things the most would find there, glad and sorry at things as light as the toys of children, at which they laugh and cry in a breath. How easily is the heart puffed up with a thing or a word that pleaseth us, bladder-like, swelled with a little air, and it shrinks again, in discouragements and fear, upon the touch of a needle’s point, which gives that air some vent.

What is the life of the greatest part but a continual tossing betwixt vain hopes and fears ? All their days are spent in these. Oh how vain a thing is a man even in his best estate, while he is nothing but himself ; while his heart is not united and fixed on God, and he is disquieted in vain ! How small a thing will do it ! He needs no other than his own heart ; it may prove disquietment enough to itself : his thoughts are his tormentors.

I know, some men are, by a stronger understanding and by moral principles, somewhat raised above the vulgar, and speak big of a constancy of mind ; but these are but flourishes, and acted bravery. Somewhat there may be that will hold out in some trials, but it will fall far short of this fixedness of faith. Troubles may so multiply as to drive them at length from their posture, and may come on so thick, with such violent blows, as will smite them out of their artificial guard, disorder all their Seneca and Epictetus, and all their own calm thoughts and high resolves—the approach of death,

though they make a good mien and set the best face on it, or if not, yet some kind of terror may seize on their spirits, which they are not able to shift off. But the soul trusting on God is prepared for all, not only for the calamities of war, pestilence, famine, poverty, or death, but when in the saddest apprehensions of soul, beyond hope, believes against hope; even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on him when he sees no light; Isa. l. 10. "Yea, though he slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust in him"—not merely though I die, but, "though he slay me:" when I see his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand will I look for salvation.

My brethren, my desire is to stir up in your hearts an ambition after this blessed estate of the godly who fear the Lord, and trust in him, and so fear no other thing. The common revolutions and changes of the world, and those which in these late times we ourselves have seen, and the likelihood of more and greater coming on, seem dreadful to weak minds. But let these persuade us the more to prize and seek this fixed unaffrighted station. There is no fixing but here.

Oh that you would be persuaded to break off from the vile ways of sin, which debase the soul and fill it full of terrors, and to disengage them from the vanities of this world, to take up in God, to live in him wholly, to cleave to and depend on him, to esteem nothing beside him. Excellent was the answer of that holy man to the emperor, on his first essaying him with large proffers of honour and riches, to draw him from Christ. "Offer these things," says he, "to children; I regard them not." Then, after he had tried to terrify him with threatening; "Threaten," says he, "your effeminate courtiers; I fear none of these things."

Seek to have your hearts established on him by the faith of eternal life, and then it will be ashamed to distrust him in any other thing; yea, truly, you will not much regard, nor be careful for other things how they be. It will be all

one, the better and the worse of this moment ; the things of it, even the greatest, being both in themselves so little and worthless, and of so short continuance.

Well, choose you ; but, all reckoned and examined, I had rather be the poorest believer than the greatest king on earth. How small a commotion, small in its beginning, may prove the overturning of the greatest kingdom ! But the believer is heir to a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The mightiest and most victorious prince, who hath not only lost nothing, but hath been gaining new conquests all his days, is stopped by a small distemper in the middle of his course ; he returns to his dust, and then his vast designs fall to nothing ; “In that very day his thoughts perish.” But the believer, in that very day, is sent to the possession of his crown ; that is his coronation day ; all his thoughts are accomplished. How can you affright him ? Bring him word, that his estate is ruined—“Yet my inheritance is safe,” says he. Your wife, or child, or dear friend, is dead—“Yet my Father lives.” You yourself must die—“Well then, I go home to my Father and to my inheritance.”

For the public troubles of the church, doubtless it is both a pious and a generous temper to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones ; and to be alive to the common calamities of any people, but especially of God’s own people, hath been the character of men near unto him. Observe the pathetical strains of the prophets’ bewailing, when they foretell the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more when foretelling that of the Lord’s chosen people ; they are still mindful of Sion, and mournful for her distresses. See Jer. ix. 1, and the book of Lamentations. So the Psalmist ; “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,” &c. Psalm cxxxvii. 5. Pious spirits are always public-spirited, as even brave heathens were for the commonwealth. Yet even in this, with much compassion there is a calm in a believer’s mind. How these agree, none can tell, but they who feel it. He finds amidst all hard news, yet still “a

fixed heart, trusting," satisfied in this, that deliverance shall come in due time, Psal. cii. 13 ; and that, in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted, Isa. ii. 11 ; v. 16 ; and that in all tumults, and changes, and subversions of states, still his throne is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise. So Psal. xxix. 10 ; "The Lord sitteth upon the flood : yea, the Lord sitteth king for ever ;" or, "sat in the flood," possibly referring to the general deluge ; yet then God sat quiet, and "still sitteth king for ever." He steered the ark, and still guides his church through all. So Psal. xli. throughout that whole psalm. In all commotions, the kingdom of Christ shall be spreading and growing, and the close of all shall be full victory on his side : and that is sufficient for the believer.

Of this a singular example is in Job, who was not daunted with so many ill hearings, but stood as an unmoved rock amidst the winds and waves.

In this condition there is so much sweetness, that if known, a man might suspect himself to be rather selfishly taken with it, than to be purely loving God. Such joy in believing, or at least such peace, such a serene calmness, is in no other thing in this world. Nothing either without or within a man is to be named with this trusting on his goodness, who is God ; and on his faithfulness, who, giving his promise for thy warrant, commands thee to rely on him. The holy soul still trusts under the darkest apprehensions. If it is suggested that thou art a reprobate, yet will the soul say, I will see the utmost, and hang by the hold I have, till I feel myself really cast off ; and will not willingly fall off. If I must be separated from him, he shall do it himself ; he shall shake me off while I would cleave to him. Yea, to the utmost, I will look for mercy, and will hope better : though I found him shaking me off, yet would I think he would not do it. It is good to seek after all possible assurance, but not to fret at the want of it ; for even without those assurances which some Christians hang too much upon, there is

in simple trust and reliance on God, and in a desire to walk in his ways, such a fortress of peace, as all the assaults in the world are not able to make a breach in. And to this add that unspeakable delight in walking in his fear, joined with this trust. The noble ambition of pleasing him makes one careless of pleasing or displeasing all the world. Besides, the delight in his commandments, in so pure, so just a law, holiness, victory over lusts, and temperance, hath a sweetness in it that presently pays itself, because it is agreeable to his will.

It is the godly man alone, who, by his fixed consideration in God, looks the grim visage of death in the face with an unappalled mind, which damps all the joys, and defeats all the hopes of the most prosperous, proudest, and wisest worldlings. As Archimedes said, when shot, "Thou hast called me away from an excellent demonstration," so, it spoils all their figures and fine devices. But "to the righteous, there is hope in his death." He goes through it without fear. Though riches, honours, and all the glories of this world, are with a man, yet he fears; yea, he fears the more for these, because here they must end. But the good man looks death out of countenance, in the words of David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me."

THE END.

